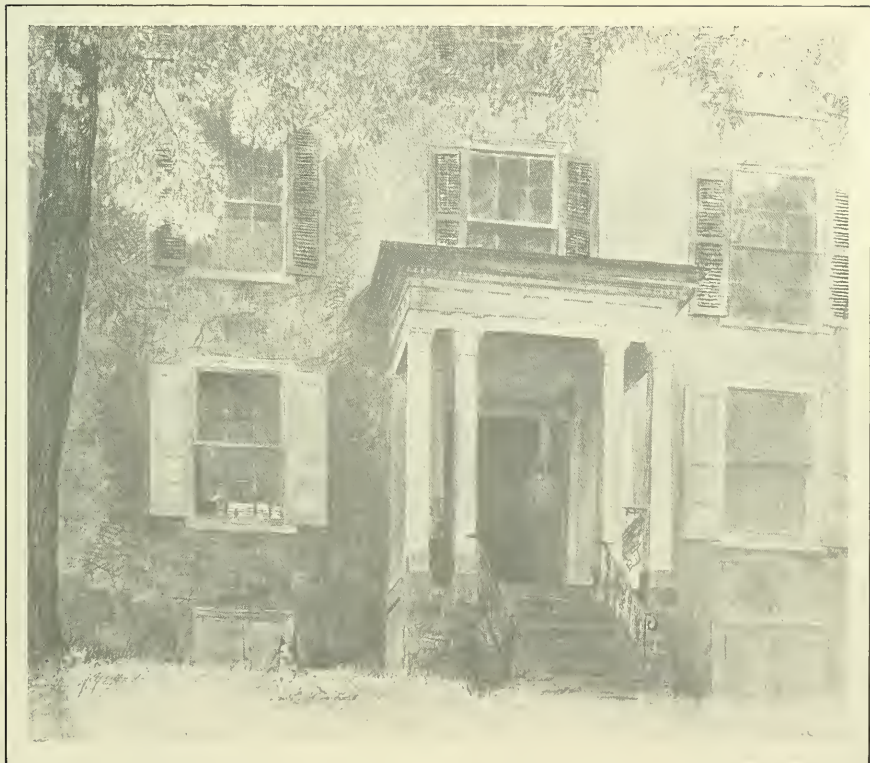


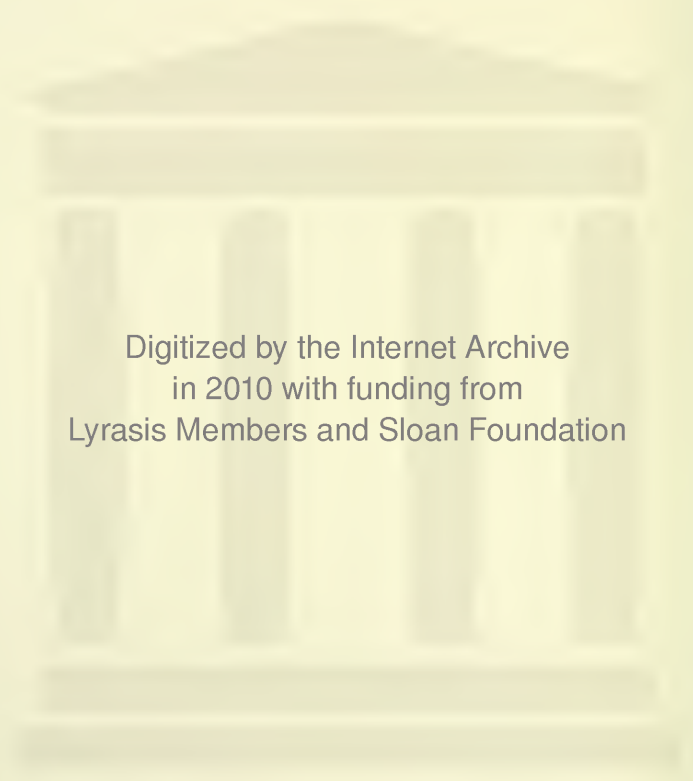
Four Quarters

VOL. 1, NO. 2

Second Series

FALL, 1987





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VOLUME 1, NUMBER 2, SECOND SERIES

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Quarter Notes

From the Editor's Quarters

This second issue in the New Series is exciting for us for several reasons.

From a publishing standpoint, it's our first venture in desktop publishing. Using personal computers and a laser printer, and leaning heavily on the advice of Mark Purcell of our Academic Computing staff, and the typing skills of Deneen Wolf and Lynette Milhausen, we set all our own type for this issue. So much for that good old excuse, "a printer's error." You may fire when ready, eagle-eyed readers.

Even more pleasing to us as editors (and we hope to you as readers) is the talent assembled in these pages, some of it local, some of it widely recognized and honored, and some of it emerging just now into highly-justified international praise.

Quarter Notes is a department we planned as a place to present the art of the essay. Although we didn't plan it to be a showcase for La Salle faculty talent, it seems to have turned out that way this time. Playwright-critic Bill Wine lets us in on what it's like to have two heads. Kevin J. Harty relates some of the wisdom of student savants, and John Keenan shares some of his correspondence from idiosyncratic authors. Movie fan Jack Rossi skewers the snobby film critics and does a little list-making of his own. (Replies from the skewered are invited.)

Historian Lee Congdon helps us penetrate a fold in the Iron Curtain, using his special knowledge of Hungary and its language. The goals of the Hungarian Revolution, Congdon

suggests, have been largely achieved right under the nose of the Soviets by that adept political chess master, Janos Kadar.

We have poems for you from distinguished, well-known American poets David Ignatow, X.J. Kennedy, and Joyce Carol Oates. There are two poems from Joseph Meredith's book in progress. The poem about Belfield captures the special atmosphere of the newest addition to the university's campus, a farm across the street that once belonged to the American painter, Charles Willson Peale. And we're especially pleased to be able to introduce more American readers to two of Ireland's finest contemporary poets, Medbh McGuckian and Eithne Strong.

In the fiction department, Allen Shepherd moves us with a tender story about a man who must learn the art of losing. And Joanne Schumacher, whose first story made a "Best" collection, tries to repeat with a witty fantasy about a man who witnesses a murder and has his whole life changed.

Raymond J. Pentzell demonstrates the breadth of his genius with the best analysis of Lillian Hellman's melodrama we have seen and a series of off-the-ceiling drawings called "Mind and Marsupials." We'll pull one out of the pocket from time to time in the pages following.

Critic Ed Walsh initiates our new department, *Book Marks*, with a review of the current O. Henry Awards. Ed is too nice to say that what's missing from the collection is a story from *Four Quarters*. The only reason for that is, of course, the fact that we did not publish in that year.



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BILL WINE

Your Plays or Mine?

As sadomasochistic relationships between consenting adults go, that of the playwright and the drama critic takes a back (aisle) seat to no one.

"Asking a writer what he thinks about critics is like asking a lamppost what it feels about dogs," John Osborne once spat. Whisper the word "critic" into the ear of any playwright, in or out of a coma, and feel the cool breeze of vitriolic metaphors sluicing by:

Legless men teaching running. Guys who know the way but can't drive the car. Biters of other people's backs. Eunuchs in a harem.

Or there's Noel Coward's cathartic confession, speaking for shellshocked dramatists throughout the cosmos: "I love criticism," he wrote, "just so long as it's unqualified praise."

I remember reading that Cowardly line as a drama critic for a daily newspaper, a job for which I was compensated in small amounts of money and large doses of self-loathing. From that side of the fence, of course, my reaction was the obligatory, condescending "Just like a playwright." If you can't stand the heat, I thought, then get out of the Kitsch Inn.

It wasn't that I had failed to realize the essential unfairness and preposterous passive-aggressiveness of the critic's position, for which the military, of all institutions, had already found the most precise and forthright of labels--sniper. It was just that I had long since deemed, in my exquisite self-righteous-

ness, that this peculiar process came with the artistic and journalistic territories. So the one-sided exchange of You-write-it-and-I'll-hate-it followed by I'll-knock-it-and-you'll-take-it was just fine with me. And if your labor of love born of blood, sweat, tears, rehearsals, and rewrites took two years and my stop back at the office after an evening out born of an imminent deadline took two hours . . . well, that's showbiz.

Then God, in a burst of finite wisdom and poetic justice, made me a playwright, an instantaneous addiction from which there would be no turning back. This was to be more than a calling; a yelling, perhaps. And one that would transform me from reviewer to reviewee, allowing me to experience one of life's unique and ineffable experiences, an unequivocal pleasure not unlike the tingle one gets while being gored by an ox.

Being Reviewed. Say it loud and there's mucous spraying; say it soft and it's almost like spraying.

Reviewing others had made me feel unnatural, uncomfortable, untoward, unfit, and unfair. Being reviewed, on the other hand, made me feel underneath my seat for a cyanide capsule to swallow. Pans of one's play's make spinal taps and income tax audits seem like paid vacations in the Caribbean.

As would have any theater critic with even a shred of self-respect, I had tried--in theory, if not in practice--to apply at least a few of Harold Clurman's "Compleat Critic's Qualifications" by writing lucidly, by being aware of my prejudices and blind spots, by erring on the side of generosity, and by "seeking to enlighten rather than carp or puff."

Then, once the appellation "playwright," ap-



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plied to me, no longer felt like the borrowing of a much taller man's dinner jacket, I vowed to accept all negative evaluations from critics as impersonal and constructive. I would carry myself with the deportment and demeanor of the mature artist, I promised, neither dismissing criticism out-of-hand nor knuckling under to its every complaint. I would be the quintessentially responsive but strong-willed playwright, never questioning the credentials of the critic, yet never placing him on too high a pedestal. I swore to read and listen to notices, to take them seriously, to separate the critical wheat from the self-indulgent chaff, and to keep a grain or three of salt at the ready.

Imagine my surprise, then, when the first two questions that spring to mind--as I watch my dramaturgical virginity disappear during the reading of the initial thorough pan of my first produced play--are: "Where do you suppose that critic lives?" and "How do you make a Molotov cocktail?"

Suddenly, all my admonishments to college students about the usefulness and assimilation of feedback during years of teaching writing courses--"Now don't take this personally, but..."; "This is not criticism of you, only the work itself, but. . ."; "Don't let this be discouraging or debilitating, but..."; "Of course I think you're capable of effective writing, but. . ."--rise in my throat. The combined taste of bile, phlegm, and hypocrisy is unmistakable.

My first play, a comedy called *Shrink!*, opens in Los Angeles in 1977, where it is reviewed by no fewer than twenty-five local publications. The critical response is best described as mixed, as approximately half the reviews are positive and half negative, with the gamut of tones ranging from unbridled

enthusiasm to unleavened contempt.

Supportive friends and colleagues, as well as the worldly producer and director of the play, express sentiments to the tune of "Not a bad at-bat your first time at the plate." But my only memory of the experience is that of a few mild recommendations and an accolade or two whizzing by at the speed of light while hordes of winged drubbings and brickbats peck at my face like the birds going after Tippi Hedren in the attic in Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*.

"This is a labored affair," writes one critic, "forced in its attempts at humor. Its characters are stock to an extreme. And the second act turns heavy, getting psychological and silly in its attempt, and falls flat."

I've never actually been sprayed with mace, but my guess is that it feels something like reading that kind of an evaluation over morning coffee.

"The hackneyed script bumbles about, collecting a bunch of wooden stereotypes to drag back and forth across the stage without destination or design."

Having trouble losing weight? Try this. Write an autobiographical play, get it produced, then read the reviews. You won't eat for a week. Guaranteed or your money back.

"The play has serious shortcomings in the plot and in the characterizations," opines another severely disappointed critic. "It aspires to be a madcap farce about a put-upon psychiatrist in the tradition of *Oh, Men! Oh, Women!* but is, alas, a bit shy in the farce department and heavy in every other area."

Unfortunately, to a playwright whose neck is



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sticking out for the first time, honest and heartfelt darts from a well-intentioned blowgun sting no less venomously than do their malicious equivalents.

What surprises me the most is the revelation that the positive reviews do so little to ameliorate the depressed condition triggered by the negative ones. Despite the fact that, for every detractor, there is another professional viewer for a Los Angeles newspaper or magazine who sings the play's praises, the disparagement still dominates the atmosphere like heavy smog. That the critic in the aisle seat of row five loves the same performance of the play that the critic in the aisle seat of row six despises does not seem to help. At best, their published reviews cancel each other out. At worst, the down-turned thumb swallows the up-turned thumb like a whale snacking on minnow.

Soon after the reviews surface, self-pity envelops you, disguised in a costume constructed by commiserating friends and colleagues--especially playwrights who have been through the process. Before long, even your thoughts sound whiny. And in Los Angeles, where the reviews of a new play are staggered over quite a few days (critics attend any performance during opening week, rather than on opening night), there is always another shoo to be dropped.

"The play is much too literate and straightforwardly realistic," complains the critic in *Variety*, "giving the audience not much reason to return from intermission."

"Freud might not appreciate this frivolous approach to psychoanalysis," chides a reviewer from Burbank.

They just don't understand me, you hear

yourself saying. I mean the play, you correct yourself. I give them documentary reality, you harumph, they see exaggeration. I give them expert farce, they see awkward realism. Why, when I was a critic...

Then the *Los Angeles Times* review hits the streets and a lot of things become clear. As a bound pile of papers drops on the pavement, you realize with a dull thud why critics are wined and dined, why reviews are feared and revered, and why all reviews are created equal but some are more equal than others.

The director of my play reads me the *Los Angeles Times* review, one of the last to be published, from a corner telephone booth near a twenty-four-hour-a-day newspaper stand in the middle of the night approximately four seconds after the first edition arrives there.

The headline, "*Shrink! Shtiks to the Ribbing*," seems promising enough. To my chagrin, however, the *Times* has the unmitigated gall to run a review along with the momentarily soothing headline.

"This is the sort of comedy that drops its pants when every other shtik has been exhausted. Affection for the Marx Brothers and revenge on psychiatrists is evident here, without any corresponding understanding of the skills of either. . . clichéd ethnic parentage, but it plays. There are plenty of laughs, though few derive from character or situations, both of which are poorly developed and lacking in a cohesive through-line."

Oh, well. The *Times* giveth and the *Times* taketh away and then some. Still, although the content of the review has me trying futilely to recall the number of the Suicide Prevention Center hotline, it is the effect of



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the piece that makes my head spin. For while my loved ones are hiding all our sharp objects, the producer calls to inform me that the theater has short-circuited our originally scheduled eighteen-week run, slicing nine weeks off the previously announced and advertised booking in less time than it takes to slice the Thanksgiving--you should pardon the expression--turkey.

This despite enthusiastic audience responses, good word-of-mouth recommendations, and fairly full houses. But, as the producer so delicately puts it, "If you don't got the *Times*, you don't got fertilizer." And if you believe he actually used that climactic euphemism, there's some swamp land in Florida he and I would like to show you.

Needless to say, the production closes down after nine weeks, still playing to crowded, vocal, seemingly satisfied houses. But another play has long since been booked to open on our ninth-week heels.

Efforts to prolong the life of our dying patient via transplants to another theater never quite materialize. "Shrink!" may rest, but not in peace--not as long as there is spilled milk to cry over or write about.

And has the critic-playwright--the two-headed monster clinging to the stubborn belief, artistically speaking, that it is still better to give than to recede--learned anything from the debacle?

Not much, but for the intuitively obvious observation that reading reviews of one's plays is a no-win game. Adulatory notices make you feel pretentious and undeserving; putdowns render you transparently talentless. So you just don't read them, right?

Wrong. Curiosity may kill cats, but lack-of kills dramatists. Pain, the playwright's lifeblood, must be invited, encouraged, experienced, remembered, reveled in. And few experiences come as close to pure pain as analyses of why your work doesn't work.

So the schizoid exercise of feeling simultaneously your sadistic critic half's contempt for your playwright alter ego and your masochistic playwright half's resentment of your critic alter ego proceeds apace.

Think of it as an ongoing dialogue between adversarial neighbors living in an anthropomorphic duplex:

Kick me, invites the downstairs playwright.

You're not worth kicking, sniffs the upstairs critic.

But we live in the same house, pleads the playwright.

Okay then, agrees the critic, bend over.



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KEVIN J. HARTY

Gladly Would They Learn . . .

Students are increasingly ingenuous—often unintentionally so—in the comments they make about literature. On the written page and in oral discussions, they never run out of ways to add new and at times keener insights into the literary works they study.

What follows are some comments and responses students have given to me in recent years. Each is a gem in its own way. Worthy more of Freud than Hawthorne was the comment that the heroine of *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne, found herself "in the testicles of despair." Another student allowed that a young man had an "incounter" followed by a romantic "trieste" with a woman of ill repute—the woman was obviously from Yugoslavia. In response to a question about what a January-May relationship was, a third student quickly volunteered that it was the kind of relationship where "the woman got pregnant in January and had to get married in May."

Finally, a recent set of final examinations included a paper in which a student noted that Mr. and Mrs. Beth were cowardly in their killing of Duncan—"Mac" evidently being the husband's first name.

JOHN P. ROSSI

Decline and Fall of Movie Criticism

What do each of these films have in common?

Blume in Love
Beyond the Valley of the Dolls
Zabriskie Point
Night of the Living Dead
The Legend of Lylah Clare
The Texas Chain Saw Massacre
Across 110th Street
Sweet Sweetback's Badass Song
Trash
Topaz

Give up? They were among the "best" films of the 1970s according to a poll of twenty-one distinguished reviewers, critics and teachers of film as compiled by Cobbett Steinberg's *Reel Facts*, 1982 edition. These twenty-one include some of the most famous American film experts: Frank Rich and Richard Schickel of *Time*, Stanley Kaufmann of the *New Republic*, Andrew Sarris, Janet Maslow and Vincent Canby of the *New York Times*.

These twenty-one experts listed by Steinberg picked their ten best American, foreign and the Third World films made during the 1970s. I will limit my discussion to the American films, having not seen enough of the foreign, or any of the Third World ones to pass judgment on them.



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What is one to make of the choices? What does it say about the leading critics and students of film in America that such dreadful films were singled out for special attention? Orwell once noted that in order to believe certain preposterous ideas one had to be an intellectual. No one with common sense would swallow such nonsense.

The fact that these distinguished critics would pick films as terrible as these ten as among the best of the decade is either an indictment of their intelligence and common sense or an awful commentary on the quality of film making in the seventies. I believe it is a little of both.

The ten films listed at the beginning of this piece are totally undistinguished, without a single redeeming feature in so far as cinematic sense is concerned. They contain no examples of outstanding acting, direction, writing, or camera work. In a word they are uniformly *dull*. Then why were they chosen? For some so-called experts it is perversity; for others a way of defying traditional canons of opinion and showing how daring they are. Just think of how you can outrage the bourgeoisie by saying that one of the best films of the decade is *Beyond the Valley of the Dolls* or even *Topaz*, by far the worst Hitchcock film ever made this side of any Brian dePalma film.

Such defiant choices also tell us that the critic has lost complete touch with the public, since these films were popular as well as critical flops. Among them only *Night of the Living Dead* and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* have achieved some success as cult films with young audiences. The rest have fortunately disappeared and are almost never revived.

As bad as these films are, it is almost as shocking to add up the votes cast by all these critics listed by Steinberg to find out the ten best films of the seventies. One discovers by this process that the best film of that dreadful decade was *Nashville*, with 11 votes, followed by *The Godfather I*, *Annie Hall* and *Petulia* with 8 votes each. Next came *Godfather II* (7 votes), *2001* and *Mean Streets* (6 votes), *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* and *Barry Lyndon* (5 votes). *Taxi Driver* and *Wild Bunch* (4 votes) make up the rest of the top ten.

In my view this is a representative survey of outstanding films. But what is one to make of *Nashville* as the clear winner as best film of the decade? This is surely an overrated film, one whose reputation has not grown since its release. If anything it already has a terribly dated look. Pauline Kael, a critic whose trendiness and absurd notions are unmatched, hailed *Nashville* in breathless terms best reserved for the *Birth of a Nation*: "I've never before seen a movie I loved in quite this way: I sat there smiling at the screen, in complete happiness." In complete sappiness might be more appropriate.

Along with *Petulia*, *Nashville* was one of those pretentiously fashionable films that dotted the early seventies as directors tried to show that they had latched onto what was wrong with America. *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is another example of this genre, this time trying to dissect the Western in light of the America of the late sixties and early seventies. All three films share another point— they are boring, with long stretches when nothing very interesting happens. Nor are they cinematic. *Nashville*, like most Altman films, has the look of having been thrown together without any overall sense of direction; *McCabe and Mrs. Miller* is so dark on the screen that at times it is difficult to tell what is happening.



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Petulia is a strange, even bizarre, film redeemed by two brilliant acting performances by George C. Scott and Shirley Knight. *Barry Lyndon*, in my view, is the worst film made by the usually interesting Stanley Kubrick. While visually powerful, it is miserably acted (if you can call what he does acting) by Ryan O'Neil. It also drags terribly at times. The rest of the films are generally superior, containing their share of quality work. They would belong in anyone's list of good movies and in the case of *The Godfather I* and perhaps *Annie Hall* will probably become classics, revived from time to time to tell us things about the life and times of the 1970s.

In looking over the various lists in Steinberg's book I am convinced that they demonstrate how out of touch with reality in America are the intellectuals who dominate writing and reviewing about the movies. For a film to be given any serious attention it must be sharply critical of life in the United States and show its values to be hollow. Better yet, it should hold these values up to ridicule. Another requirement is contempt for the public, the same kind of contempt these critics are quick to accuse Hollywood of having.

It is revealing to examine the films of the 1970s which were the most popular with the general public: *Star Wars*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Rocky*, *Jaws*. Only *Close Encounters*, which had some pretensions to be lecturing the world on its failures, was taken seriously by the critics. The rest were considered pap, even if high-class pap as in the case of *Star Wars*. *Rocky* and *Jaws* were dismissed as childish. It is my guess that in future these films will be shown over and over again because they touch a responsive chord with each new audience. *Rocky* is the eternal underdog success story, well told in a likeable

fashion. It is a film that has a genuine affection for its audience and for itself. *Jaws* is a superior shocker, a film genre that has remained popular with audiences since *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. Finally neither *Rocky* nor *Jaws* is pretentious; they seek to tell a good, interesting story (which after all is what movies are really about), not to deliver some "profound" message. Critics could fall all over a hokey piece of nonsense like *The Big Chill* because it has a message that they responded to—what happened to the great causes of the 1960s. The fact that most people are not interested in the sixties any longer doesn't faze the critics—they still are lamenting their lost youth, their great causes, and their idealism.

Looking back on the 1970s, I decided to make my own list of favorite films. First, here are the films that I believe will survive because each in its own way contains some facet of film greatness:

Patton
The Shootist
Annie Hall
Taxi Driver
French Connection
Godfather I
Family Plot
American Graffiti
The Last Picture Show

I add the last to this list as a hunch. I believe that Bogdanovich went overboard trying to say something significant in this film but overall it has the "feel" of a good movie. By that I mean it gives the viewer the impression that it is the work of someone who genuinely loves the movies and cares for his work. The other films, different as they are, share a sense of cinema. They contain examples of



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fine acting (Scott, DeNiro, Brando, Hackman and John Wayne) or superb direction as in *The Godfather* and *The French Connection*. *Family Plot* is there because it is in my view the best film Hitchcock made after *Psycho*. It has all the ingredients of Hitchcock's black humor and sense of fun as well as two off-beat and kooky acting performances from Bruce Dern and Barbra Harris. Like *The Last Picture Show*, I believe *Family Plot* eventually will be rediscovered and endure. I have a shorter list of all-time overrated films from the 1970s—works that are so frozen in time that they will come someday to be regarded as curios of our age of excess.

MASH

Network

A Touch of Class

Shampoo

Five Easy Pieces

All were overpraised when they came out and are still defended by critics and film historians—but with diminishing enthusiasm. *MASH* is a case where the film is inferior to the TV show (*The Odd Couple* is another example of this). All those fashionable critics who rave about Altman should be made to defend his view of women in this film, especially his treatment of Hot Lips who is literally driven insane by her male counterparts. *Network* suffers from all the flaws of Paddy Chayefsky: everything is overdone—especially the writing and the characterization, supposedly Chayefsky's forte. It also contains an embarrassingly bad acting performance from Peter Finch, for which Hollywood in its infinite wisdom gave him an Academy Award. In twenty years these two films will be virtually unwatchable except as period pieces. *Five Easy Pieces* has almost reached that level already. I would like to know how 18-year-olds react to that film today. My guess would be with confusion. Jack Nicholson's performance is good, but here is an overall meanness of spirit run-

ning through the whole enterprise that I guess would put off young audiences today. The picture is a confusing example of late sixties philosophy at its most sophomoric and self-centered.

Someone once noted that being fashionable today is the worst form of fascism. This pessimistic view is confirmed if you examine what has passed for film criticism in recent years. Most film criticism has been obsessively trendy. For years no one but a handful of intellectual near-critics took movies very seriously. But since the 1960s "film" and "cinema" have become major items in the cultural courses that proliferate all over America. With this spread of the cult of the cinema has gone an intellectual sappiness and mush-headedness that passes for judgment on the part of our critics. Where once you could turn to the movie critic for a summary of the film and a few interesting observations about it, now you are treated either to a pedantic lecture on film technique or a trendy lament about some fatal flaw in America. Among high-powered critics it is almost a safe bet that any film that is critical of America and comes from an obscure director will be treated as a great work of art.

Both film making and film criticism, in my view, reached a nadir in the seventies. The former lost sight of its audience; the latter was caught up in pedantry and preciousness. It was no longer safe to take a positive review seriously. When you got to the theatre you often sat there stunned trying to figure out how this film earned such a positive endorsement. Critics wrote for other critics and chased each others egos. Good judgment and common sense disappeared as movie making reached perhaps its lowest state in American history. Only the critics were happy; the public was bored.



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JOHN KEENAN

Authors I Have Known

Authors are wonderful, and sometimes wonderfully crazy and idiosyncratic. Now that this magazine uses mostly solicited materials, I miss the unpredictable mail I used to get. I'm not talking about the ordinary crazy stuff—the envelopes written in pencil or crayon, the chain letters, or the pen pal requests from inmates of penitentiaries. I'm talking about letters from writers who take themselves and their work seriously, perhaps too seriously. Let me share with you a few excerpts from my file.

A Brooklyn writer whose work had not won acceptance here in the past sent the following cover letter with his latest effort:

Just because you rejected "Breakin Up Is Hard to Do" and "Humper's Heaven" there's no reason to believe you won't read this story, which is based on a phone conversation that really did take place and evaluate it with an open mind. Even if it is rather obscene. And you won't find any change in the characters: what do you expect in a five-page story?

He was right on several counts. We read the story with an open mind, it was rather obscene, the characters didn't change, and neither did the editorial verdict.

A young writer from New Orleans came up with an approach I hadn't seen before: he didn't submit his story, he submitted his Creative Writing instructor's *comments* on his story and then asked if we wanted to see it.

We did not.

A man from Ontario described himself in the heading of his letter as "Historian, Educator, former Foreign Correspondent, Author of four books on the Social Sciences." His cover letter covered four typed pages, not counting the attached copies of various clippings. "I know my article will cause a public outcry," he wrote. "What I want to achieve is a national controversy." Obviously, he had a most optimistic idea of our circulation.

When we did not reply promptly enough, Canada's renaissance man wrote again, strongly urging a favorable decision. According to that letter, "The *Atlantic* magazine did not want to excite its readers with such a controversial issue. The *American Scholar* wanted to omit the most important sections, you are my third try."

The author took a called third strike here, but somehow I doubt that he will consider himself out. My bet is that his manuscript warning of doomsday for the West is still making the rounds.

Poets are a special matter, of course. An envelope postmarked "Enterprise, Kansas" was rubber-stamped in several places with the provocative question, "Have You Read Ed?" Inside the envelope were several poems and a short note that said:

Hello,
I hereby certify the enclosed to be my own material. Thank you.
Accept this or the kid gets it.

Now I can say that I have read Ed, and I have no doubt that the enclosed poems were his own material. I do hope he was kidding about the kid because we did not accept his offerings.



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Another self-proclaimed poet from Oklahoma enclosed a pale green business card with dark green type proclaiming him as "The Bard of Bartlesville." One of his poems appeared to be a commercial for his poetic services, ending as follows (imaginative punctuation and spelling retained):

Because in poetry, our message will
linger,
in the minds, of the people who read,
So if you want, to get your message
across?

a catchy limerick is what you need.
AND THE BARD, WILL WRITE IT
FOR YOU,
FOR A HANSOME FEE, OF
COURSE!

He did not include a stamped self-addressed envelope, so his poems wound up in my file. Though I do not intend to pay a fee, handsome or otherwise, this piece offers him publication of sorts. You will have to decide what message his catchy limerick conveys.



There were times when Beatrice
simply wanted to pull a marsupial
over her head and say
"Kiss off" to Life.

JOYCE CAROL OATES

The Convalescent

Those weeks as death rose in me
I learned: the outside wants
to come in. The outside wants
to flood in: how simple.

Skin stretched too tight wears thin,
wears out. Pockmarks, fissures,
something slyly caressing.

Hoping
to enter.

Do you hear that fly?
That buzzing?
It's the same fly
Emily heard,
buzzing,
rooting in,
a soft sigh.
Here.

LEE CONGDON

How to Play Chess in East Central Europe

After dinner in their cramped Budapest apartment, my friends and I seated ourselves around the oversized television set. Thirty years had elapsed since Hungarians had taken to the barricades and we wanted to see the "documentary" devoted to what the government of Janos Kadar, still trying to extort some concession from history, persists in calling the "counterrevolution."

As the picture filled the room, I recognized Jozsef Cardinal Mindszenty, the Roman Catholic primate who had been made to confess to treason in 1949. Released from prison by the revolutionaries, he certainly *looked* like the *eminense grise* he was said to have been. And as for the aging citizens who volunteered testimony concerning sinister, even fascist, elements among the Cardinal's co-conspirators, they were nothing if not sincere. To be sure, their recollections were rather disconnected, but government spokesmen such as Janos Berecz stepped in at critical junctures to provide the context for events and to explain how close the nation had come to abandoning socialism's appointed path. Enlarging upon what he had said in an interview granted to *Konyvvilag* (*Book World*), Berecz distinguished between the people, who longed for a more humane socialism, and the traitors who exploited that legitimate aspiration.

As I watched, I slipped back in time to 1962, the year I began to study Hungary's Finno-Ugrian, and quite beautiful, language at the Army Language School in Monterey, California. Most of my instructors were former freedom fighters whose memories were still vivid and whose interest in grammar and vocabulary was decidedly limited. More than anything else, they wanted to tell Americans what they and their country had suffered. They were decent men, deeply patriotic and fervently anti-communist. Exiled from a world in which they had expected to live out their lives, they were lonely and, in ungarded moments, they betrayed their bitterness and frustration. Although my classmates and I sympathized with them, we were disturbed by their obsessive and unsparring references to Jews. Not being weighed down by excess historical baggage, we jumped to the conclusion that most Hungarians were anti-Semites.

But there was much we did not know. We would have been astonished, for example, if someone had told us then that prior to the Great War, Jews had looked to Hungary as a Promised Land of tolerance and opportunity. Vastly outnumbered in their own kingdom by non-Magyar peoples, the Hungarians exerted every honest effort, and no little pressure, to promote assimilation. The second half of the nineteenth century, remember, was an age of nation building. And precisely for that reason, the Slavic and Ruma-

nian peoples clung to their identities, even at the cost of continued political, social, and economic disabilities. The Jews chose a different path. By century's end, three-quarters of them had elected to assimilate, magyarizing their names as a token of their sincerity. Without any prompting, they labored long and hard to prove their mettle and their loyalty. Often, indeed, they surpassed "pure" Hungarians in their zeal for the nation. In recognition of such fidelity and service, Franz Josef, Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary, awarded many of them patents of nobility.

Unfortunately for all concerned, the very success of Jewish assimilation stirred the flickering embers of anti-Semitism. Attracted by the unique opportunities Hungary offered, Jews poured into the country from Rumania, Russia, and Galicia. By 1910, 200,000 of them resided in Budapest, or "Judapest" as some wags began to call it; they comprised nearly one fourth of the capital's inhabitants. What is more, they were becoming increasingly conspicuous in economic, professional, and intellectual life. As a result, their new countrymen, particularly those who had not made their mark, began to channel their disappointments into racial resentment. In 1882, the town of Tiszaeszlár witnessed a "ritual murder" trial that made it necessary for Prime Minister Kalman Tisza, a Calvinist and pure Hungarian, to reaffirm his longstanding commitment to protect the rights of every citizen of the realm. Neither he nor his successors, however, could prevent the faculty at the University of Budapest from establishing a *de facto* quota for professors of Jewish origin.

That being said, it remains true that anti-Semitism did not become a serious problem in Hungary until 1919, the year that the newly-organized Hungarian Communist Party swept into power in the wake of the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy and the failure of Michael Karolyi's democratic republic. Proclaimed as a desperate measure to forestall Hungary's dismemberment by the victorious Allies, the Hungarian Soviet Republic survived for 133 days, long enough to convince many Hungarians that they had made a mistake by welcoming an "alien race" into their midst. Almost all of the most visible communist leaders, including the Republic's strong man Bela Kun, were assimilated Jews. Brutal and arrogant, these men quickly forfeited the support of those whom they ruled. When the Rumanians, hungry for territory, and the counter-revolutionaries, primed for revenge, put an end to the beleaguered country's first communist experiment, Hungarians turned on the Jews with a ferocity born of betrayal. It was 1921 before Prime Minister Istvan Bethlen, a conservative of the old school, brought the radical White Terrorists to heel.

Throughout the interwar period, neither the Calvinist Regent, Admiral Miklos Horthy, nor many other citizens of "Christian-National" Hungary took the trouble to distinguish between communists and Jews. But then neither did the populists, radicals who placed their faith in the peasantry rather than the proletariat and who preferred the countryside to the city. They insisted that land reform was the nation's most urgent imperative and looked with suspicion on urban radicals, many of who were assimilated Jews more interested in revolutionizing the industrial order. During the economically-dislocated 1930s, the populists introduced "sociography" to Hungarian literature; the genre's first master was Gyula Illyes, one of this century's greatest Hungarian poets and men of letters.

Illyes was born on a Transdanubian *puszta*, an aggregate of farm laborers' dwellings on a large estate. In 1936, home from exile in Paris, he published *Puszták nepe* (*People*

of the *Pusztá*), a brilliant experiment in symbolic realism and a gift of love to those from whom he had come. Reading it, one cannot but be struck by populism's fierce racial pride; "on the *pusztá*," Illyes wrote, "almost everywhere I found pure Hungarians." Living far from the decadent city, such people were not merely the salt of the nation; they were the nation. Because of his deep national feeling, Illyes always maintained a noticeably cool attitude toward other East Central European nationalities—and Hungarian Jews. In a revealing aside in *People of the Puszta*, he complained about Ervin Szabo, the Jewish-Hungarian Marxist who played a major role in Budapest's fin de siècle intellectual life. Szabo, he noted pointedly, "never came across the people of the *pusztas*." Unlike the folklorists-composers Bela Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly, neither of whom was Jewish, he had not set out to seek their wisdom.

People of the Puszta was the finest, but far from the only, work to come from the pen of a "village explorer." The sophisticated, though eclectic, Laszlo Nemeth and several writers of lesser stature joined Illyes in the search for a third road, one that had not been charted by the counter-revolutionary government or the urban (read: Jewish) left, and that would lead neither to capitalism nor to Marxian socialism. Thus it was that in 1934-35 he allied himself with the "New Spiritual Front," a loose coalition of intellectuals that invested some hope in Prime Minister Gyula Gombos's semi-fascist government. Gombos, the members of the Front believed, was on the right track; he looked with disfavor on the landed aristocracy and championed a new socialism. "Yes," he was once quoted as saying, "we are socialists, Hungarian national socialists." Although this was a socialism of fools—anti-Semitism being an integral element—there can be no doubt that Gombos intended to appeal to the masses, in particular the rural poor. That he was not a political democrat did not matter, because the populists tended to view democracy in social and economic terms.

With most of the communists in exile, populism established itself as the dominant trend in Hungarian intellectual life on the eve of Hitler's invasion of Poland. When, for instance, the populists organized the radical "March Front" in 1937, several young communists joined them; these included Ferenc Donath and Geza Losonczy, both of whom later sided with the 1956 revolutionaries. At almost the same time, communist theorist Jozsef Revai hailed the populist movement as "the most important intellectual current of the last two decades in Hungary." And it maintained its preeminent position throughout the war, witness the fact that in 1945 virtually all Hungarians agreed that the long postponed land reform should be the nation's top priority. True enough, the free elections held that year produced a vote of only seven percent for the populist-backed National Peasant Party, as compared to 38 percent for the Smallholders' Party. But that was largely because voters were convinced that the latter was better organized and hence in a stronger position to resist Soviet pressures. Those pressures made it possible for the communists to win a 17 percent share of the vote. For although the election was free, it was conducted under the Red Army's shadow.

With that army came Hungarian communists who had lived for years in the Soviet Union. Initially, Stalin ordered them to delay the seizure of power for from 10 to 15 years, because he wished to divert Western attention from Poland and to make new takeovers to appear to be the consequence of indigenous forces. But by 1947, when he presided over the organization of the Cominform, he had concluded that the Western leaders were alert to his designs on the countries of East Central Europe; there was nothing more to be gained by waiting. Within a year, the Hungarian communists elimi-

nated all opposition and transformed Hungary into a "People's Democracy," a euphemism for the Stalinist state. Shortly before his death in 1983, Istvan Vas, one of party leader Matyas Rakosi's right-hand men, explained to a Western reporter how they went about their work:

We had democratic parties—the Smallholders' Party, the Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party, and about twenty other different kinds of parties. We could not finish them all off at the same time. So we started with the weakest ones. We applied such enormous pressure on them—partly through arrests, once we controlled the police, and partly through economic and all the other kinds of pressure—that they were forced to dissolve voluntarily.

Once again the communists ruled Hungary and once again those communists, including Vas (born Weinberger), were nearly all assimilated Jews. From my Monterey teachers I learned that Rakosi was born Roth and that Erno Gero, second in command, was once Singer. The hated Mihaly Farkas had formerly answered to the name Wolf. Cultural tsar Jozsef Revai was Jewish, and so was Gabor Peter, the sadistic chief of the political police. Only one prominent "Muscovite" was not: Imre Nagy came from a family of poor Calvinist peasants.

Like Kun and Rakosi, Nagy had been won to bolshevism while he was a prisoner-of-war in Russia during World War I. Back home at war's end, he eked out a living as a metal worker and earned a reputation as the party's leading expert on the land question. After a brief imprisonment for illegal political activities, he retreated to the homeland of the Revolution. When, 15 years later, he reentered Hungary with the Red Army, he took over as Minister of Agriculture in the first coalition government. Rakosi subsequently transferred him to the Ministry of Interior, but not before he had signed into law a land reform bill that was anything but collectivist. Under its provisions, the government broke up the large estates and distributed small parcels of land to poor peasants.

During the dark years of terror from 1948 to 1953, Nagy became the most popular of Hungary's communist leaders. In large part, that was due to his "Christian" background and the role he played in the land reform. But there was something more. His party experiences had not made him, as they had most of his comrades, cynical and cruel; nor, despite his commitment to internationalism, had he wavered in his love for his country. Rakosi and Gero hated him because they knew that the Russians valued his uncomplicated loyalty and looked to the day when they might have use for a non-Jew whose unpretentious manner lent Hungarian communism what little popular attraction it possessed.

That day arrived shortly after Stalin died in March 1953. The new Soviet leaders summoned the Hungarian communists to Moscow, where, after accusing Rakosi of aspiring to crown himself "the Jewish king of Hungary," they appointed Nagy Prime Minister. On assuming his responsibilities, the modest party regular announced a "New Course" that would tackle agricultural problems, place new emphasis on light industry, and amnesty political prisoners. For the first time in recent memory, Hungarians could breathe the air of hope, if not of freedom. But party currents were about to reverse direction once more; in 1955, as part of his successful campaign to discredit the reform-minded George Malenkov, Nikita Khrushchev stripped Nagy of his power and ordered

his expulsion from the party. Rakosi was back on top.

But not for long. Thanks to the New Course's more relaxed atmosphere, Hungary's intellectuals had discovered new courage. Even the communists among them had begun to awaken from their dogmatic slumber. As the revolt of the mind gathered momentum during the summer of 1956, the Soviets withdrew their support from Rakosi for the last time. Initially, Anastas Mikoyan asked Andras Hegedus, then a young party apparatchik and now a leading dissident, to take over as party secretary. Neither a Muscovite nor a Jew, Hegedus seemed to be an ideal choice, but when he pleaded inexperience the Russians turned to Gero. This ill-advised decision hastened the coming of the revolution on 23 October.

The day after police fired the first shots, Imre Nagy took the reins of power back into his hands and for the next 12 days the eyes of the world turned toward Budapest. Caught in a crossfire of escalating demands from the streets and mounting suspicions from the Soviet embassy, Nagy struggled heroically to avert a national disaster. In this he was joined by General Bela Kiraly, commander-in-chief of the revolutionary forces. Kiraly wished to avoid a military confrontation with Soviet Russia, knowing full well what the outcome would be. Now a distinguished historian living in the United States, he had said repeatedly that he, Nagy, and the Hungarian people sought to reform, not to destroy, the system. "Wisdom dictated that you cannot abolish a Communist Party at the threshold of the Soviet Union, with Soviet garrisons in Hungary." Only *after* he informed Nagy, late in the evening of 30 October, that Soviet troops had encircled Budapest, did the Prime Minister declare Hungary's neutrality and withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact.

That announcement met with the Hungarian people's approval, and in that sense the revolution had triumphed. It was, however, a fugitive victory, for on 4 November the Russians reentered Budapest in overwhelming force. Nagy, who according to Kiraly "was really an emotional Hungarian patriot," resolutely refused to leave the country. He did, however, seek asylum in the Yugoslav embassy after learning that Janos Kadar, a member of his cabinet, had formed a new, Soviet-backed, government. We know now that sometime on the first of November, the Russians informed Kadar that they had chosen him to reimpose order, Russian style, on his own people,

But had he chosen them? Did he have any real alternative? We are not likely ever to know the answer to these questions, though recently he told a *Time* reporter that he had not applied for the job. We may as well believe him, for when he returned to Budapest on 7 November he was universally denounced as a quisling. And not only in Hungary. Rakosi and Kadar, Albert Camus wrote at the time, "are of the same stamp. They differ only by the number of heads to their credit, and if Rakosi's total is more impressive, this will not be so for long. In any event, whether the bald killer or the persecuted persecutor (see below) rules over Hungary makes no difference as to the freedom of that country."

More than thirty years later, we know that the French *moraliste* was wrong. Observing the revolution's anniversary in 1986, Western commentators could not find words flattering enough to describe Kadar. In a report entitled "Building Freedoms Out of Defeat," *Time* maintained that "if open elections were held tomorrow, Kadar, at 74, would win by virtual acclamation." According to *Newsweek*, "Hungary's leaders can

claim, justifiably, that they have accomplished a remarkable transformation...Kadar is now widely recognized as the leader of the most liberal regime in Eastern Europe." I read those reports, and many others like them, with a deep sense of personal involvement, because I lived in Budapest for 12 months in 1970-71 and for nine in 1977-78. I returned to the country for brief visits in 1983, 1985, and 1986. Hence, the reflections that follow are—to borrow from the Jewish-Hungarian thinker Karl Mannheim—existentially related.

Perhaps I should begin by saying that the Hungarians do not yet live in utopia. They must contend with a critical housing shortage, widespread alcoholism, an alienated Gypsy minority, and the highest suicide rate in the world. Moreover, some of the ballyhooed reforms are not what they have been cracked up to be. In June of 1985, for example, the government announced that it planned to liberalize electoral procedures. For the first time since the communists seized power, they would not present Hungarians with a single slate of candidates appointed by the People's Front. But as a friend of mine reported, the entire project ended in farce. At one nomination meeting, scheduled to begin at 5:30, officials locked the doors at 3:00. Only some of those who began to arrive about 4:30 were eventually admitted an hour later, and on entering, they discovered that every seat had been taken. No one whom the party judged to be unacceptable managed to gain a place on the ballot.

Far worse than that are the humiliating reminders of the Russian presence. Recently, two friends described to me their vacation trip along the Danube. Traveling at a leisurely pace, they camped out several nights. Late one afternoon, after they had finished securing their tent, a Russian military officer approached and ordered them to leave. Although he spoke only Russian, he made it clear that they were trespassing on Russian soil. Refusing to move, my friends asked why it was that the Russians had not posted a sign. With the aid of a translator, the officer warned that they would be shot if they did not move on immediately. Summoning up their courage, my friends replied: "This is the Hungarian People's Republic; we are Hungarians, and on territory belonging to the Hungarian People's Republic Hungarian citizens may move freely." When they demanded to speak with a *Hungarian* official, the officer signaled to armed sentries, who escorted them to the Russian camp. Finally, a Hungarian police officer did arrive and asked them to remake their camp at another location, which they agreed to do without further incident.

This is the kind of insult, national as well as personal, that the people of an occupied land must learn to expect and accept. No one in Hungary appreciates this more fully than Janos Kadar, the self-effacing man who has ruled the country since 1956. Kadar was born Janos Cservenka—his unmarried mother's name—in Fiume (now Rijeka) in 1912. His father abandoned the family and, at war's end, his mother took him to Budapest, where he worked as a machinist and dreamed of becoming a chess master. "Almost every evening," he remembered years later, "I either read or played chess sitting on the curb under the street lamp until midnight." In 1928, he entered a chess competition and won first prize: a copy of Friedrich Engels's *Anti-Dühring*. Reading and re-reading that famous polemic set in motion a series of events that, three years later, led him into the illegal Communist Party.

There followed the predictable arrest and three years in prison. Steeled by the experience, Kadar survived in Hungary during the Second World War and, along with the ambitious Laszlo Rajk, another Gentile, led the "home communists." After the party

consolidated its power in 1948, he held a number of posts, without displaying any outstanding qualities. As he did not constitute an obvious threat to Rakosi's power, he escaped the fate of his friend Rajk, who was purged in 1949. Still, Rakosi was a suspicious and cruel man. In the spring of 1951, he ordered Kadar's arrest on the usual trumped up charges of treason and espionage. We know that Hungary's future leader endured torture and three more years in prison before being released and rehabilitated; on 25 October 1956, he replaced Gero as party secretary.

When he assumed power after the Soviet intervention, Kadar did possess some credentials. He had suffered at Rakosi's hands and he was not Jewish. Yet only a rash man would have predicted that he would one day be admired by his countrymen and praised by the Western press. How did he accomplish this remarkable feat? The answer to that question is closely related to the fact that he is a chess player, and a good one. He has made political moves the way he moves his pieces on the chess board: slowly and cautiously. With the patience of one who knows that politics, like chess, repays long-term strategy, he has moved step by step to dismantle the terror, institute the decentralized and market-oriented New Economic Mechanism, revitalize agriculture, and guarantee a wide latitude for public expression. More recently, he has increased economic ties with the West and begun to assert a modest independence in foreign policy. After years of parroting the Soviet line in international affairs, Kadar charged Foreign Minister Matyas Szuros with responsibility for speaking and acting in defense of Hungary's national interest.

Perhaps, then, this is the place to repeat one of my favorite Kadar jokes. Kadar, Reagan, and Gorbachev come to a fork in the road and must decide whether to go to the left or to the right. Reagan says that they can only take the road to the right. Gorbachev insists that they go to the left. After thinking for a moment, Kadar suggests that they signal left—and then turn right! Like most Hungarian jokes, this one makes a serious point, for Kadar is a conservative leader. Far better than many of his critics, he knows that nations are not theoretical constructs that can be altered and rearranged at will. They are living historical identities in which continuities set the limits of change. He knows too that the Russians are not likely to withdraw in the foreseeable future and that they possess few, if any, scruples. On 17 August 1968, three days before Soviet forces invaded Czechoslovakia to end what they judged to be an uncontrolled reform movement, Kadar met privately with Czech leader Alexander Dubcek in a futile effort to alert him to reality: "Do you *really* not know the kind of people you're dealing with?," he asked in frustration.

And yet, as an experienced chess player, Kadar also knows that a series of well-conceived moves can produce major changes in the relationships of political forces, without disrupting national life or, more to the point, inviting foreign intervention. Indeed, a skillful player might alter the entire political match before his opponent is fully aware of it—and by then it may be too late. No single move that Kadar has made has prompted the Soviets to clear the board and send in troops, yet taken together his reforms have won for the Hungarians much—I do not say all—that they fought and died for in 1956.

At the same time, Kadar has a conservative's instinct for compromise, a perennial necessity for the geopolitically unlucky Hungarians. Indeed, there are those who argue that he has achieved an *Ausgleich* (Compromise) with the Russians, much as the equally

unassuming Ferenc Deak did with the Austrians in 1867. Deak's *Ausgleich* ended the almost twenty years of Austrian absolutism that followed the abortive Hungarian Revolution of 1848-49, another victim of Russian interventionism. Writing in *Uj Latohtar* (*New Horizon*), an excellent emigre review, Istvan Borsody recently argued against such a comparison, perhaps recalling Marx's clever remark about historical repetition: "World-historical facts and personages occur, as it were, twice...the second [time] as farce." Borsody did not, however, deny Kadar his due. He described the New Economic Mechanism as a "quiet revolution" and he spoke of the "narrow and difficult road" Kadar must travel "between Europe and Moscow." It is also a dangerous road, but danger of a different kind lurks in the insistence that anything short of total and immediate change should be treated as if it were dishonorable and worthless. For those who will live out their lives in Hungary, it matters very much whether a Kadar or a Rakosi is at the helm.

Even those whose anti-communist credentials are in perfect order have recognized that truth. Take George Mikes, for example. The Hungarian-born humorist is the author of an angry book about the 1956 Revolution, but after a visit to his homeland in 1970, he filed an honest report. Yes, he did preface his remarks by saying that Kadar could not escape responsibility for his complicity in the judicial murder of Imre Nagy in 1958. But since then, he insisted, the Hungarian leader had "proved himself to be a good and humane man, a miracle of survival, an astute politician, a Hungarian patriot, a man of decent instincts and of liberal tendencies, a man with a sense of humor..." By practical extension, Professor Charles Gati has argued convincingly that "there is absolutely nothing wrong, un-American, or immoral about aiming at that which is achievable: the 'Kadarization' rather than 'Finlandization' or neutralization of Eastern Europe."

Which brings me to the Hungarian dissidents, at least one of whom, George Konrad, is well known in the West. Unlike their Soviet counterparts, the rebel Hungarians do not end up in prison, much less in Siberia. Some of them publish some of their work in Hungary and all of them travel abroad, however infrequently. What is it that they want? In Konrad's case, it is not always easy to say. Born in 1933 to a Jewish-Hungarian family, he is a man of character, a sociologist and writer of fiction whose novel, *The Loser*, succeeds admirably in capturing the inner, spiritual, history of twentieth-century Hungary. On the other hand, his extended essay, *Antipolitics*, is uneven and quixotic. Konrad can be perceptive, as when he writes that "the Hungarian people are a fundamentally conservative people, and Hungarian culture is fundamentally a conservative culture." Or again when he observed that the nations of East Central Europe must seek to recover their independence gradually and peacefully. Yet at the same time he is capable of writing that Europe should invite the U.S. and the USSR to withdraw their military forces, as if the two superpowers were moral and political twins.

Konrad can say such things because he is a left-liberal in the Western sense, as critical of the United States as he is of the Soviet Union. He is, he says, at home in New York, where intellectuals lionize him and other dissidents such as Istvan Eorsi, disciple of the legendary Marxist philosopher George Lukacs and contributor to left-wing Western journals such as *Telos*. I recall meeting Eorsi in the spring of 1978. He is intelligent, witty, and utterly fearless, as a result of his three-year imprisonment after 1956. Like many former communists, however, he tends to be a maximalist with respect to every demand, witness his behavior before and during the 1985 meeting in Budapest of

Hungarian and Western radicals who wished to expose the sham character of an officially-sponsored European Cultural Forum summoned to review the Helsinki "human rights" agreements.

Reporting on that meeting for *The New York Review of Books*, Timothy Garton Ash described a session of the Hungarian writers' union at which Eorsi made an appeal for censorship. In that way, the Hungarian argued, writers would know exactly what was and what was not allowed and would no longer be tempted to exercise self-censorship. Ash thought that that was a perfectly responsible demand to make and expressed his own regret that so many Hungarians get "around the system rather than confronting it." Such talk comes naturally to Western intellectuals who live in societies that are not merely open, but permissive. They enjoy the satisfying illusion of oppression without having to be bothered by its unpleasant reality. No wonder, then, that Ash was accompanied by professional protesters such as Susan Sontag and Hans Magnus Enzensberger.

I am afraid that many other Hungarian dissidents adopt the same Western leftist line. One evening some years ago, I met Sandor Radnoti, a younger member of the so-called Budapest School of Marxism that owes its inspiration to Lukacs. I accompanied him to a lecture, after which we walked to someone's apartment to discuss the latest samizdat publication. In the course of conversation, Radnoti described Ernst Bloch, the late, exquisitely muddled utopian, as one of the greatest thinkers of this century. I expressed my disagreement and took my leave, thankful that Kadar, not Radnoti and his friends, ruled Hungary. The fact is that the country's finest thinkers are neither dissidents nor craven apologists for the regime. They are professors, research scholars, and editors who are well trained and honest. I should like to mention especially the supremely intelligent philosopher J.C. Nyiri and the outstanding historians Peter Hanak, Geza Jeszensky, Gyorgy Ranki (who occupies the Hungarian Chair at Indiana University), and Gyorgy Litvan (who as a young man told Rakosi to his face that he did not have the people's trust). Ash seems not to be aware of their existence.

It is suggestive, I think, that very few dissidents choose to emigrate. Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher, charter members of the Budapest School, did do so in 1978 and, after several years in Australia, accepted positions at New York's New School for Social Research, where they will certainly be at home. Prolific and outspoken ex-communists, they have nothing but contempt for Kadar, who does not meet their lofty political standards. In a recent polemic entitled *Hungary 1956 Revisited*, they took it upon themselves to lecture Kadar's Western admirers, denounce the "Yalta-Potsdam system"—for which they hold the United States and the Soviet Union equally responsible—and lobby for what they call "radical democracy." Unfortunately, they write with the same self-assurance and zealotry with which they once promoted the communist cause.

In their favor, I should add that they have abandoned Lukacs's Stalinism and embraced what they offer as the teachings of the late Istvan Bibó, Minister Without Portfolio in Imre Nagy's government. Bibó, they write rather inelegantly, was "perhaps the greatest post-war leftist (non-doctrinaire socialist) political theorist of Eastern Europe," the "potential architect of a democratic socialist Hungary." Although Heller and Feher cast Bibó in their own image, there is no doubt that both at home and abroad, inside and outside of the dissident movement, Hungarians look to him as a symbol of a better future. That is why the *samizdat* collection of essays in his honor included contributions

from scholars who do not usually write for the underground press. All in all, it would be no exaggeration to speak of the "Bibo mystique."

Like Nagy and Kadar, Istvan Bibó was a quiet, unpretentious man. Born to a Protestant family in 1911, he studied law in Hungary and abroad before entering government service in 1934. Ten years later, as an official in the Ministry of Justice, he counterfeited letters in a risky effort to save Jewish lives. On 16 October 1944, Hungary's fascist regime ordered his arrest; when he was suspended and released four days later, he went into hiding. After the Red Army drove the Germans out of Budapest, he joined the National Peasant Party and over the next three years completed the political and historical essays upon which his reputation now rests. Looking back on that period in his life, he himself once composed his own epitaph: "Istvan Bibó: Lived 1945-1948."

That was not quite true. His days of service in Imre Nagy's government were marked by courage and composure. He had just completed an important essay to remind Hungarians of what it was like to speak the truth—publicly. It is not easy for us to understand what it meant for him to commit this common sense observation to paper: "The thesis that history is the history of class struggles is an empty phrase, which is worth as much as its diametric opposite, to wit, that history is the history of compromises. In the final analysis, there are examples to support either proposition and these do not make one more valid than the other." Against Marxism, he emphasized the importance of the peasantry and the soul-destroying character of revolutionary violence. "At this particular moment, if we do not give in to the euphoria of violence, we Hungarians have the possibility of bringing to a triumphant conclusion the first positive, successful revolution of the Twentieth Century." And so they did—before the Russians intervened.

Refusing to recognize the legality of that intervention, Bibó remained at his desk in the neo-Gothic Parliament building, drafting an appeal to the world. For this and other impertinences, such as his astute "Plan for a Compromise Solution to the Hungarian Question," he was sentenced to life in prison. The Kadar government freed him in 1963 and he lived on until 1979, long enough to savor his rediscovery by a younger generation of intellectuals.

Anyone who reads Bibó's essays will find them to be thoughtful and intelligent, but not brilliant or well written. Their standing derives from other factors. First, Bibó presented a modified version of populism, the most nationalistic tradition in the history of the Hungarian left. Populism "fits" Hungarian realities not only because it elevates nationalism above internationalism, but also because it celebrates the land and rejects both capitalism and communism. For a nation in-between, both geographically and politically, it offers a "third road," the title of a collection of Bibó's essays published in London in 1960.

Bibó's popularity is also due to his standing as *the* philosopher of the 1956 revolution and to his strength of character. A Protestant and hence the "purest" of Hungarians—Catholics being associated with Austria—he extended the hand of brotherhood to the Hungarian Jews. His famous essay of 1948, "The Jewish Question in Hungary After 1944," radiates a decency that is mercifully free of sentimentality. And so does the statement he drafted in the revolution's final hours: "Before the world, I reject the slander according to which the glorious Hungarian Revolution would have turned fascist or

anti-Semitic: in this struggle, the entire Hungarian people participated without distinction of class or religion."

Like the bridges that span the Danube, connecting ancient, aristocratic Buda with modern, "Jewish" Pest, Bibó constructed spiritual bridges between non-Jewish and Jewish Hungarians. In this as well as other ways, he resembled Oszkar Jaszi, the Jewish-Hungarian sociologist, anti-communist, and conscience of the pre-World-War-I intelligentsia. Born in an ethnically-mixed area of what was then eastern Hungary, Jaszi always emphasized the problem of land reform. As early as 1906, he wrote that "Land must be given to the Hungarian people by means of the most far-reaching politics of partition. The *latifundia* [great estates] must be replaced by peasant holdings." It was no accident, as Marxists like to say, that his friend Karl Polanyi—another assimilated Jew—co-edited the first important collection of populist writings to appear in English translation: *The Plough and the Pen* (1963). The conciliatory tradition that Bibó and Jaszi represent might properly be called "conservative democracy," something quite different, and less residually utopian, than the Budapest School's "radical democracy."

In many ways, it was communism that destroyed the old bridges linking Hungarians of Jewish and non-Jewish origin, bridges that had withstood the pre-1914 stresses and strains. Thus, the more the present system evolves in the direction of Jaszi and Bibó's political vision, the closer Hungary will come to healing its historical wounds and to providing a better life for all of its people. That is why Jaszi's rehabilitation in the 1970s and 1980s was so important. And that is also why it was more than a literary event when in 1986 Magveto Press (Budapest) issued three volumes of Bibó's *Valogatott tanulmányok* (*Selected Studies*). It was a *political* signal, even if the missing volume—covering the years 1949-1971—served as a sober reminder that for all his skill, the chess master is not likely to checkmate his opponent.

X. J. KENNEDY

Pileup

In our thick ranks a tire blew, and our pack
Piled six wrecks deep upon our leader's back--
Then from the north, fresh skidmarks counterscored
That sudden mountain founded on one Ford,
A merge of metal half a mile across.
Cooling in seat-belts, dazed in total loss,
We sat there all one long eight-nighted day,
Gridlocked, still beeping for our rights of way.

It seemed we had elected to retreat
To separate Trappist walls. The Paraclete
Jaywalked the ripples of our muddled minds.
The stricken dark solidified its blinds.
A man who'd carried pigeons in a cote
Threw one aloft. It circled, grew remote,
Vanished entirely. Came back in a week,
An olive-loaf on rye clutched in its beak.

Though time ran on and some survivors kissed,
Life out beyond held little that we missed.
A man two wrecks ahead of me complained
That his crab-grass campaign had got behind.
A woman in a pick-up truck gave birth.
A sleet-nailed wind came gusting from the north.

Some deigned to frisk dead bodies. We did not.
 The sky rained lo-cal dinners, piping hot,
 On Red Cross parachutes. To fix the hinge
 Of someone's smashed leg in the outer fringe,
 They coptered surgeons. Deep-voiced as the grave,
 Our radios kept broadcasting their balm:
Your rescuers are nearing now. Keep calm.
 We sat attentive in the thickening gloom
 To spot commercials, burning to consume
 While Lady Vicki from her limousine
 Dispensed free condom packs and Vaseline.

At last, across the dawn a copter crawled
 Like a slow Mayfly amplified. It bawled:
 "Drivers, stand by. Light's opening ahead.
 A crew is on its way. Prepare your dead."
 Tinging the sky, intense acetylene
 Kept carving, carving at the pileup. Clean
 And freed at last, the road ahead shone clear
 And salvaged, we roared off in second gear.

A Story by
ALLEN SHEPHERD

Independently Blue

Oncology was at the end of a long series of thin red arrows, on the wall, the floor, down corridors, around corners, up ramps, and in 319 Lee was recognizable, just barely, in the bed by the window as he seemed to smile. He had almost no hair left, he was terribly white and thin. He was wearing green-tinted glasses. He was 46, his last birthday, and a vain man still. Harold smiled back, thinking (as Patty had said) that fifteen minutes would be about right, for either of them.

Though they hadn't seen each other often, not recently, they'd always talked easily. So too now. About the doctors, whom Lee seemed to think well of, endless tests, an experienced course of treatment he was considering, then the Red Sox and their new acquisition. Almost fifteen minutes. Not one nurse but two came, one with pills in a cup, the other with lunch, which Lee didn't touch.

For a change, Harold asked how Patty and the kids were making out. Lee took it as "with the prospect of your coming death" and seemed grateful for the subject, the candor.

"Patty's hanging on, I'm proud of her," he said.

Harold asked what he could do, what he would like to have him do, knowing that Lee would understand he'd do anything he could.

"I don't know, Hal. Call her up. Exercise your charm, give her a hand. She likes you, babe, she thinks you're a trustworthy man, four-square."

Harold blinked. The description was familiar. With a slightly different tone, a coded indictment, not unlike what he'd heard from Marian during the early meetings with the marriage counselor.

But he remembered years before that, better times, when he and Lee—with two others, in two canoes, it must have been in July because Harold had had his birthday—had paddled and portaged a week, he standing on that day he remembered knee deep in the cold, clear water smiling happily at the blazing sunset and drinking bourbon and lake water in a paper cup as Lee splashed out to join him and with arms around each other's shoulders they rocked back and forth. It was a good time. Lee would remember.

He did, he missed all that screwing around, that *Deliverance* stuff. Or the time on the Racquet River when they opened the dam and we had eight inches of water left. Lee smiled and tried to sit up. Harold held out his hand. He thought of the book he'd

brought, but Lee was looking worse, his mouth wouldn't close all the way. Harold waited while Lee, eyes closed, struggled to collect himself.

"Be good," Harold said, patting him gently on the leg. "I'll be back."

Lee said thank you and they waved at each other, ten feet apart. Green arrows led Harold back to the elevator and the lobby and finally to the garage. He was very glad to be out.

When Harold and Marian had bought their house, there were still two elm trees in front of it—old ones, tall and shapely, and infected with blight, as soon appeared. For a few years they lingered, leafless, bark dropping from bare branches. Then the town cut them down and sawed them up and trucked them away and gouged out the stumps. In the ten feet between street and sidewalk large yellow and gray toadstools flourished. Then one Saturday morning Lee arrived in his pickup with two fifteen-foot red maples and birds built nests in each of the trees the first year. Marian had not met Lee before. She thought he was nice. Harold and Marian began to do things occasionally with Lee and Patty.

For the memorial service Harold went first to the wrong church—why would there be two Baptist churches on the same street? One had probably split off from the other. Beyond basis biography, most of which the very young minister got right, the service was a tissue of clichés and uninspired inventions. Harold knew that Lee would have been amused and embarrassed. It seemed to be a new church or refurbished, with cushioned chairs instead of pews and an umber carpet. They'd had a leak in the roof. It was warm.

Three rows behind Harold sat his ex-spouse, accompanied by a balding doctor with whom, as report had it, she'd been living for several months. Harold no longer had mixed feelings about Marian. He was surprised to see that she was getting fat—a second chin and her eyes, much made up, seemed to be smaller, deeper in her head. Raisins. They ignored each other. No one would intend to look that way, surely. During their twenty-odd years of marriage, she'd never been slender but always under control, a pretty woman. "Kitten" he had called her. When he had stopped, she had asked him why. The service lasted exactly forty-five minutes.

Ahead of Harold a line was forming, on to Patty through a door marked in gold lettering, "Assembly of God." Not a Baptist church. At last Harold hugged her and smelled her Chanel No. 5, like Marian's, and swallowed hard. She thanked him for his beautiful letter, hand with two gold rings still on his shoulder, and he said he would call her. Harold shook hands with Patty and Lee's two children, who looked bored.

It had been no worse than he'd thought it would be. It had not had much to do with Lee, who had been the one person, lawyer aside, he had talked to about the divorce, who had seemed naturally to grasp the horror of the typed courthouse schedule, the line mid-way down the sheet which read "Ferguson v. Ferguson." He still did not understand how Marian could do it, but she had, smiling and beginning to be more than plump, evidently after long planning. Harold had cried every day for weeks, at home.

He waited two weeks after the memorial service, then one more week, then called Patty and realized within a few minutes that he was going to take her to dinner. Of course, anywhere she'd like to go. It felt very odd; so in fact had almost everything since the divorce. With the few women he'd taken out he'd either been too domestically affectionate—a pat on the bottom for one as he helped her off with her coat—or stricken shy, absolutely wordless. He couldn't seem to get it right.

They had a drink in Patty's living room, then one more, which by request he fixed. He did know where some things were. When she came to the door looking not good but not bad, Harold began, without a thought—my God! he almost said it—"How's Lee?" It came out, strangled, "How's things?" but Patty didn't seem to notice. She spoke again of his letter (typed, nobody could read Harold's writing) and how wonderful it was to have such friends, a man you could absolutely depend on. What he had written was true but Harold was embarrassed, wished she would stop. Dependable, kind, generous: what Marian had said almost to the end.

It was indeed true about his friendship with Lee, what it had meant to him. Years before, one of Marian's friends had been divorced, her husband had up and left, and they had visited her out in the country, a big old house, in the pouring rain, and during dinner the furnace had gone off. It was the cellar which was flooding, but Laurie did not know where anything was or even what. Harold found the heater and turned it off and found the sump pump and turned it on, and felt awfully sorry for her and offered at any time to help, but within a year she had sold the house for an enormous price and was living with the real estate man. That was different, of course.

In the car Patty smoked a cigarette. Giving that up was the next thing, she said. After attending to the doctors and the hospital and the lawyer and the accountant. Harold was hungry, he wanted to eat. He was not a good or interested cook. He had no patience with recipes. He did not like to eat out alone, it was too lonely. If he got home late from work he would have perhaps a drink, a large Scotch of recent months, and then some Red Delicious apples or later some ice cream with maple syrup. He'd bought a gallon can of syrup.

Patty asked him to order. As far as the food went and the drink it was a very good meal, but not otherwise. He couldn't credit the things he was hearing. Lee didn't have insurance; he had medical insurance but no life insurance. Harold was stunned. "Jesus Christ," he said. "Jesus." He had to ask: "Why not?" She didn't know, she'd thought he did. She'd thought everybody did. But he didn't or she hadn't found any, not in his desk or in the safe deposit box. And he hid things: an old diary from before they were married and in the drawer underneath his desk Canadian money, quite a lot of it.

And who is Frank Malzone, she wanted to know. She'd found an old autograph book with just one name signed in it: Frank Malzone. Harold knew that one. Malzone played for the Red Sox in the '50s, into the '60s, third base. Pretty good, he'd come after Junior Stephens. Patty said it was like finding out you didn't know who you'd been married to. Harold knew about that.

Harold didn't have any life insurance either. No more. No need. No point. But he certainly had things he ought to get rid of. Not to put in the rubbish, he would burn

them in the living room fireplace. The wine was almost gone, good stuff: Harold divided it equally. Patty was wearing a dark green wool dress with little gold buttons, her hair was blonde, blonder that it used to be, and she was wearing gold jewelry. She was looking directly at him over her wine glass.

Then she told him the worst thing—Lee had letters from women. Harold grimaced. "For God sake," he said, "for God sake." He groaned and put his hands in his lap. Lee had had affairs with two of her friends. He said he was sorry and unhappily listened to how she'd found them, a number of packets in rubber bands, but he was already beginning to wonder why she was telling him. Because he was a good friend and she needed to talk about it to somebody. But he was Lee's friend too, first, most. And women told those kinds of things to other women. He certainly wouldn't have told her anything about the divorce. Some things perhaps, but not others. Not like that. He doubted her. He hoped she would not tell any more.

She smoked another cigarette as he drove her home. She would like to go to a movie sometime and she was grateful for his patient listening and the wonderful dinner. He walked her to her door, stood for a moment under the light looking up at her on the step. He felt very strongly that Lee was dead and he was unhappy for her as she waved goodbye.

Home again, he took the dog out. He supposed Lee might have done it; he didn't seem to know much about people any more. Earlier in the week he had bought some king-size sheets—he's never done that before, never bought any sheets—so his bed was changed and fresh. He ought to sell it, the bed, the mattress was fifteen years old. When they were still speaking, he'd told Marian he'd given it away. "What it was worth," she said.

Several nights later Harold was walking around his house trying to decide what to throw away, what he wouldn't like anybody to find, have to dispose of. There'd be somebody. He was more than ready for the eleven o'clock news when it came. He'd begun with letters, with an old green cardboard laundry box he hardly ever thought of, on a shelf at the back of his clothes closet. Couldn't throw them away without knowing what they were, read a few, one from Marian years ago when she loved him (had she ever?), and was overcome. He couldn't read them and he couldn't keep them, so he burned them one at a time in the fireplace, squatting before the flames biting his forefinger.

In a week he heard from Patty, who had decided that Lee's friend should choose—she didn't call them keepsakes. Something, and he was to pick it out. From his late father-in-law Harold had had a silver shoehorn; it was an antique, he was told. Sitting again in Patty's living room, Harold opted for a small, two-bladed pocket knife. She looked, he thought, a little better—not so drawn. He was glad of that. Though it was still early afternoon, Patty carried a drink with her, and not the first of the day either, Harold thought.

"Hal, I'm going to have to sell the house," she said. She had just told him she was roasting a chicken.

"Are you really sure?" he asked. She was, she couldn't afford to stay in it, she wasn't even sure she wanted to. He was sorry, he would hate to lose his own house, but he didn't want to stay for dinner. He asked after the children and was told they were both going to Dr. Braun, but Harold didn't recognize the name.

"They need to talk to somebody else about their father."

Not Lee. Harold could not bring himself to ask the questions she wanted. He knew. She was—what? 43? 44? No training, no experience, no marketable skills. No money to speak of, not much coming in. Kids at the shrink, talking about the improvident, adulterous father. Ashes in the hall closet waiting to be scattered. And Patty out of her home and into a second floor condo and trying to be somebody's smiling, middle-aged, competent, blonde receptionist.

Holding Lee's knife in his pocket, Harold was heartily sorry. So much so that he did stay and for long hours helped do all that needed doing: talked, drank, ate, cleared, listened, slowed down her drinking, to no avail. By eight o'clock Harold tried to put her to bed, get her at least under the quilt. He wanted to be away. She was heavier than she looked.

Speaking with sudden clarity, up on one elbow, hair over her eyes, she said, "You still don't have a clue, do you?" Harold wanted to be at home. "Hal, didn't you even suspect her? Or him? Or just not care?" "No," he said, backing out, and closed her bedroom door. In fact, he had wondered about Marian and had told Lee, the one person he'd trusted, what he was afraid of.



A Story by
JULIE SCHUMACHER

Conversations with Killer

Though he could hardly believe it himself, Morris was a witness to murder. In a bar in Romeo township, just three short miles from the ocean, he had seen a man shot with a handgun through the stomach. It was a cool night in August, and Morris had marveled at his own calm as he checked the dying pulse, lifted the man's gray head from the damp cement floor, and slipped his jacket underneath. He'd acted as promptly and responsibly as could be expected of anyone, and felt proud, in spite of the death, to have acquitted himself so well.

The policemen arrived in a cluster, in several cars. They wrote things down on little pads. A barmaid pointed Morris out and then a tall, unsmiling man with several weapons at his waist came by to talk. Had Morris witnessed the shooting? Yes, he'd seen it perfectly, right there in the vestibule as he was coming from the john. How much drinking had he done? Not a lot, not too much: three, maybe four beers, nothing else. The assailant's face? It was hard to say, he wasn't certain; it was in shadow and happened fast. The policeman took his name and telephone and thanked him for his time. Morris thanked himself for his sharp eyes and steady nerves. He was a calm, white male in his thirties, and he could be counted on to tell the truth.

Back home at the apartment, Morris told his landlord about the shooting. The old man always stayed up late, squatting like a package at the front door of the complex.

"They lock him up?" The landlord creaked to a standing position.

"They will when they find him."

"Sure. Half the people I know should be locked up. Nobody gets arrested these days. Everybody's loose."

"It was dark," Morris said. "I could have touched him with my hand."

"It's like Trenton around here," the landlord said. "You can't go anywhere without bumping into criminals. Were you the only one that saw it?"

Morris picked at a mosquito bite. "I don't know. I didn't notice."

"That's all I need, that's great. Every cop in New Jersey banging down my goddamn door. I got a witness under my roof and it's like living in Trenton. You got a match?"

Morris handed him a lighter. He saw the moon at its usual height between the streetlamp and the marsh. "This never happened to me before."

The old man licked at his cigar. "Murderers. We've got a world full of murderers. It's enough to make you give up sleeping." He shook his head. "Don't track any blood in there on my carpet. Wipe your feet."

Morris went inside and pressed the elevator button. Then he thought better of it and took the stairs. He walked down the hall and passed his own apartment, knocking instead on 33. Jonathan answered wearing a red silk shirt unbuttoned halfway down his chest. He smelled of animal skins and southern fruit.

"I guess you're busy," Morris said. "I saw a murder."

Jonathan practiced looking genial. "Anyone I know?"

"You think I'm kidding," Morris said. He heard a hiccup, then a laugh, in the direction of Jonathan's couch. "He might have seen me. He could be looking for me now."

"So if he drops by here I'll tell him you moved to Puerto Rico."

Morris stared. Jonathan's chest was lightly sprinkled with Christmas glitter. "I'm being serious," he said.

"Do it elsewhere," said Jonathan. He yawned and closed the door.

In bed with the lights on, Morris drank a beer and chewed some vitamins. When he finally closed his eyes, he remembered the gleam of the killer's wristwatch. It was bright gold—he could see it shine above the dark black gun—the kind of watch a wealthy man, not a criminal, would wear. He called the police. "A gold watch?" said the lieutenant who had questioned him. "All right, sir, I'll write that down." Morris hung up the phone and shut off the light. He remembered a scar on the killer's hand: not a big scar, but distinctive all the same. "Right hand or left?" said the lieutenant. It made Morris jump. Did the lieutenant think he was making this up? "Right hand. It was his trigger hand." "And how far away did you say you were at the time, sir?"

Morris considered. "Maybe ten feet. Maybe more. I was coming out of the mens' room—out of the corridor."

"Good eyesight," said the lieutenant. "I'll write that down."

Morris wondered if there were any sarcasm in the lieutenant's tone. He turned out the light again and fell asleep.

In the middle of the night, he dreamed the killer came to his apartment. "Nice place," the killer said. He had a thick, grubby voice, as though his throat were full of oil.

"Why did you do it?" Morris asked.

"It needed doing," said the killer.

"Did you know him?"

The killer shrugged. His shoes left mudprints on the floor. He brushed past Morris on his way to the window and looked out across the marsh. "What an eyesore. Are there any other views?"

"They all face the same direction. That's all there is," Morris said.

"Not where I come from," said the killer.

By morning, even Mrs. Gaskin in 37 had heard the news. "A murder!" she whispered, clutching his arm on her way to the stairs. "Did the killer have a motive?"

Morris, reminded that telling Jonathan was like posting a bulletin, said he had no idea. He knocked on 33, and Jonathan opened holding a water pistol and wearing a red bandana like a mask. He was on the phone but managed to wave Morris in with a squirt.

"Okay, this is what happened. He's down in Romeo, in this seedy little tavern, and he sees this guy pull out a gun. Morris jumps him; the guy bucks like a horse. They're breaking everything in sight, rolling around the bar like a couple of maniacs, and the gun goes off and kills a lady in the toilet. Can you believe it? This is Morris I'm talking about! Yeah, big feet, brown hair. He's right here in my apartment, he'll tell you himself."

"Who was that?" Morris said, when Jonathan hung up the phone.

"Harold Murtog—you remember Harold—that fag who ran McPurdy's restaurant."

"I thought you hated Harold."

"I do. But this is a great story. Did I get it right?"

"No."

"What the hell. I was probably close. You're a real hero, a soldier. Shooting women off of toilets." Jonathan changed the red bandana for a lab jacket. *County Memorial* was embroidered in dark blue letters across the front.

"I didn't shoot anyone," Morris said. "I just saw it. And it wasn't a woman. It was a man in a hallway."

"Sure, we get the coverup already. Tomorrow it won't have happened at all."

Morris picked at a hangnail. "I tried to tell you last night but you were busy."

"Tell me today. Tell me at lunch. You want to rendezvous at the Slop? Special on kidneys from the terminal ward--"

"How about noon?" Morris said.

"Noon it is." He patted Morris on the back. "I'll keep an eye out for your buddy."

Morris spent his morning at the unemployment office. He waited in line A, to pick up a form; in line C to turn it in, signed in triplicate; and in line F to tell a woman with a large blue wart on the side of her face that, yes, he was actively seeking work. As soon as the county reopened St. Ignatius, Morris said, a medical technician could get a job.

"St. Ignatius," the woman said. She poked the wart with an eraser. "Was he the one full of arrows?"

Morris said he didn't know.

"Catholics," said the woman. "They can remember all that stuff. You can't get a job over at County Memorial?"

"I tried," Morris said. "They didn't give out many transfers." He thought of adding that his good friend Jonathan had gotten transferred, but only because he had slept with the supervisor. "They didn't seem to do things on the basis of seniority."

"That's what I heard." The woman stamped his form and handed it back. "Everybody screwing in the freight elevators. Keep the yellow copy and put the green one in the box."

While he was waiting in line H, Morris tested his eyesight. He held a copy of *Time* magazine over one eye and read the posters on the far side of the room. He put the magazine over his other eye and repeated the procedure. Were the letters as clear? Or could he read them only because he knew what they said already? He closed both eyes and imagined himself back in Romeo. Which eye was facing the killer? A man with bottle-bottom glasses handed over his check. "Don't spend it all in one place," the man wheezed. It was almost 12:00.

Jonathan was waiting in the Slop. They slid their trays along the metal track: fish patties, meat loaf with brown gravy, potato buds and yellow pudding. Morris was reminded of the board games he had played as a boy: roll a four and go back for jello, pick up a spoon and proceed to soup. Jonathan was testing things and putting them back. They paid and sat down.

"You look lousy," Jonathan said. "Are you still worried about your buddy? I hear he hasn't checked in."

Morris shrugged and stirred his coffee. He imagined the cool white stomach, the tiny round opening just the size of a finger six inches above the navel. When he and Jonathan had worked together they used to eat breakfast by the morgue, and when Jonathan finished with his eggs he'd open the wide steel doors where the bodies rested on their shelves, pretending they were soldiers in a barracks and he the drill sergeant.

"Laziest outfit I've ever seen," he'd tell Morris. Morris opened a pack of sugar. "I keep thinking about him. I wonder what he's like."

"Dead," said Jonathan.

"No, I mean the killer. Do you ever have conversations with people, but they're not really there?"

"No," said Jonathan. "I can't claim that experience."

"It's not an experience," Morris said. "I just want to place this guy. To figure him out."

"Ten-to-one he raises rabbits." Jonathan burped. "Or he's a nursery school teacher."

"What I'm worried about," Morris said, "is that I'll start to forget things. I might have to testify. What if I can't remember what I saw? I mean, how long can a person be expected to remember something? I'd had a few drinks by the time it happened."

"So write it down. Do you want to swap me that pudding?"

"I tried to write it down, but then I started to have doubts. I was in the middle of a sentence and then I realized I'd made a mistake on the police report. I called them up and told them the killer had a scar on his hand, but then I realized I was wrong. I saw the scar on a bartender. It just stuck in my head."

"Maybe the bartender was the killer."

"No, he was still serving drinks when it happened, at the other end of the bar."

"So call and tell them you made a mistake. Tell them, 'Sorry, Mr. Cooper, I was snorting coke all night and got my scars mixed up.' Can I eat your fries if you don't want them?"

"I guess I shouldn't worry about it," Morris said. "But it makes me wonder, what's the best way to remember? Should I think about it all the time, or try to block it out completely? What if the more I play it back, the fainter it gets—like a worn recording?"

Jonathan stared at him. "Brilliant, Boris, you're a magician with words. Pass me the ketchup and hand over those fries."

"What do you think, though, really? It's important to me."

"Important? Jonathan said. "This looks like the high point of your life."

On the way out of the hospital Morris stopped at a pay phone and dialed Lt. Fawley. Lt. Fawley wasn't in, but would Morris like to leave a message? Morris explained his

situation, retracting his statement about the scar. "Okay, no scar," said the voice. As if it were that simple, Morris thought. As if the picture of a murderer's hand could be erased in just one second. Maybe they hadn't written down anything he said.

A bird had crapped on Morris' windshield, in the middle of the driver's side. He scraped the mess up with a kleenex and opened the door. The car was long and green and bulky, conspicuously American. Jonathan, who drove something small, often joked about its wife-and-three-kid capacity. Morris put the keys in the ignition. "Nice car," the killer said. The killer's family was in back. Morris yawned and put on his seat belt. He started the car.

The killer was probably a man who loved danger. He took risks. Morris rolled down a window and unfastened the seat belt. Then he fastened it again. It was two in the afternoon on a hot day in August, and he was a large, homely man on a road in New Jersey. He wondered why the killer spared him.

"Are you going to fester here all day?" The killer's breath was cool and salty.

"I wasn't festering," Morris said. "I should go home and do some things. I have some laundry that needs washing."

"Life's too short for doing laundry," the killer said. "Suppose you have a heart attack?"

"My heart is fine."

"That's what they all say," said the killer. "Look what happened to your dad. Only forty-six years old at his own funeral. That gives you, let's say, a dozen years at the outside?"

"Don't be morose."

"I'm just being realistic. You can get a lot done in a dozen years. Forget the laundry."

Morris took off the brake.

"Hang a right," the killer said.

They passed the Oh Boy grocery, the sign for Iwanna Lake.

"Now a left. And through the light." They smelled the sour smell of marshes near the bay.

"I used to love this drive," the killer said. "Look at the bridges lined up in a row. Look at the water. Look at the fishing boats heading toward the dock."

Morris parked and locked the car. His feet were twenty-five yards from where the dead man had fallen, only ten steps away from the tavern's wooden door. "You're on

your own," the killer said, and Morris pushed on into the gloom. A big-armed woman dressed in flowered houseprint asked him what he would have. He'd have a beer.

"Seventy-five," the woman said. "Make it a dollar even change." Morris handed her a dollar and looked around. The bar was dim and nearly empty; he saw the short dark hallway near the bathrooms where he stood the night before.

At the end of his second beer he saw a woman with a pool cue step behind him into the light. She was wearing tight black jeans and an orange button-front sweater, and a pair of pointy blue shoes that several toes were squeezing out of. She put a quarter in the slot and leaned over the table. The swinging lamplight caught her face and he saw her frosted blond hair parted exactly in the middle, brushed and curled symmetrically, her nose small and fine and sharp, her forehead pale, her mouth a deep rose. He knew he'd seen her once before. She held the cue ball in her palm, then put it down to take a shot. She threw him a glance and he looked at her toenails, like cherry jellybeans all in a row.

"I guess you heard about the killing," he said.

She nearly speared him with the back of the cue stick on her way around the table.

"He was shot right over there, not too far from where we're standing."

She sank two stripes and then a solid.

"I saw it happen," Morris coughed. "I was a witness."

She put the cue stick on the floor, its blue tip even with her nose. "So you're the one," she said. Her name was Fawna. She accepted when he offered her a beer.

"Where are you from?" Morris asked, though he had a feeling that he already knew.

"I'm a Romme-ite." She put the beerglass to her lips and he watched the frown in the center of her forehead, a tender wrinkle of concentration. Morris tried to picture her naked, but could imagine only her feet and her arms, nothing more.

"What did the cops say?" Fawna asked.

"They're still searching. They said they'd call me if they found him."

"And you're the witness." She lit a cigarette. "Do you remember what he looks like?"

"I'm not sure. I can't describe him; it's an impression."

Fawna signalled to the waitress. "An impression. How about we buy a couple shots?"

Morris glanced at her breasts, unbearably soft in the orange sweater. They were large for a woman with such small hands and fragile bones.

"You know my father was a cop." She crossed her legs. "He died of a stroke at the wheel of his car and nearly wiped out a family."

"Awful," Morris said. He ordered a pitcher.

"A carful of kids on their way to a picnic. He forced them clear off the road. What do you do for a living, Morris?" She pronounced it *Maurice*.

"I'm a technologist," he said. "I look through microscopes and shuffle records."

"I love microscopes. Everything looks real tiny." Fawna ran her fingers through her hair and he knew all over again that he'd seen her before.

"I know," he said. "I saw you last night. You were here last night the same as I was."

"I came in for a while," she said. "I didn't stay long."

"Why'd you come back?"

"Just now?" She shrugged. "I like to play pool."

Morris finished his beer and poured another round. She asked him questions about himself and he realized, in a kind of haze, that she was flirting.

"I just want to know one more thing," he said. "Were you here in the bar when he was shot?"

Fawna laughed but didn't answer.

"You didn't see it?" he repeated.

She leaned forward across the table, the white tip of her nose only inches from his own. "Let's say," she breathed, "let's say I was standing across the hall, inside the ladies' room, and watched it happen. Let's say the blood landed right by my shoes."

Morris thought of her toenails, painted red. "You would have seen him from that angle. You would have seen the killer's face."

"Not necessarily," Fawna said. "If I was taking a leak I certainly wouldn't have."

"You said you were *standing*."

"Maybe I was crouching. It was a nicer way to say it."

"What does he look like," Morris said. He felt his brain begin to float.

"Don't take it so serious." She dumped some quarters on the bar.

"He watched her pick up her purse and push back the chair. She wouldn't look him in the face. "Tell me the truth," he said. He watched her walking toward the door and wondered what her thighs were like. "What about the killer?" he shouted, when she put her hand on the metal knob.

"What about him?" Fawna said, and then she stepped down into the light.

Morris drove home carefully and wrote down the facts. He drew a little diagram. He drew himself standing in the hallway of the bathroom, hidden from the gunman but in view of the victim, and across the hall, closer to the assailant, the entrance to the ladies' room with a face above the swinging doors. Maybe she was in on it, and now that he'd pointed himself out, they would know where to find him. He dialed Lt. Fawley. He hung up, picturing Fawna with a cue stick and a rifle at her hip. It was ridiculous. She was a nice girl and he had frightened her. She had thick, creamy breasts and he had driven her away.

He tore up the diagram and fixed another drink. The phone rang. It was Lt. Fawley. Had his phone just rung, and had he guessed it was Morris? No, it was a coincidence. He only wanted to remind Morris that he shouldn't leave the area without giving then notice. Morris knew that very well. Did they take him for a moron? He thanked Lt. Fawley and opened the freezer. Three ice trays, an unwrapped popsicle, a package of frozen peas and two cans of grape juice. He slammed the freezer and opened the cabinets. One box of Cheerios, two boxes of whole wheat crackers, four cans of tuna fish and an ant trap.

He ate a half a box of crackers and opened the tuna. He turned the television on. Chuck Connors was jumping across rooftops. He'd been shot in the leg but managed to leap from the top of an air conditioner onto a fire escape down below. Morris turned the channel. Two musicals and a talk-show special on venereal disease. Chuck Connors tore a strip of bandage from his shirt. He grit his teeth and tied it tight around his leg.

"There are many, many people who refuse to seek help," said a woman on the talk-show.

Morris took a six-pack of Piel's from the refrigerator.

"Infecting your partner may seriously damage a love relationship," the woman said.

Morris dialed information. He asked for Fawna. "I don't know her last name, but it's important," he said. "Do you live near the Tavern?"

"I live in Pinesville," said the operator. "It's a retirement home."

Morris couldn't find his beer. Why would she be working if she'd retired?

"Hello?" The woman whistled. "If she didn't give you her name or number and you don't have her home address--"

"You think I'm wasting my time," Morris said. "You think she wouldn't want to see me."

"I wouldn't put money on it," said the operator, "but it's a fairly good bet."

Morris hung up the phone and ate a tuna-cracker sandwich. He watched the news. There was a five-minute special on the hazards of barbecuing. Not a word about the killer. He imagined the texture of Fawna's mouth, pink as salmon. He heard a knocking at the door. "Jonathan?" No one answered. Morris peered through the slot and saw Jonathan, barely standing. When he opened the door the smell of booze was overwhelming.

"Hey, Morris. Kill anybody lately?"

"Just before you came in," Morris said. "I shot a family."

Jonathan snorted. "Anything to eat in here?"

"Peas. How about some hot buttered peas."

"Sick. You're a sick man, Boris. How about a steak. I'll take it raw."

Morris boiled the peas in water. He tossed them with butter and salt. "You can eat these like popcorn. Straight into your mouth."

Jonathan ate a small handful and lay down on the couch. "Ah, Boris," he said, "there were so many women! I was out at the Dolphin and then the Tangerine Palace. I could have found you a prize."

"I've seen your prizes," Morris said. "Did you hear any news about the killer?"

Jonathan punched his fist into the peas. "We are talking about *women*, Boris. *Lots of them*. We are *not* talking about killers."

"I'm just curious," Morris said.

"I think I'm ready to puke these things." Jonathan headed for the bathroom, then changed his mind and sprawled behind the couch. "Why don't you leave it for a while? This guy's running your show. He's turned you into a moron."

"That's not his fault," Morris said. "He probably can't help the way he acts. He's got a reason."

Jonathan's head was beneath the couch.

"Do you think he'll get away with it?" Morris asked. "I mean, do you think he's guilty?"

Jonathan fell asleep and didn't answer.

Morris woke with a headache at 9:15 and decided that, in spite of the obstacles, he would have a productive day. At 9:35 he shaved and brushed his teeth. He read for several minutes on the toilet, drank black coffee (instant, with an ice cube), and ate three English muffins. He decided to wash the car. He grabbed some rags from under the sink and went outside. Two long stringy clouds, the sky a head-poaching blue. He put on his sunglasses. He took the hose from the garage and screwed it onto the spigot. There was a growing line of rust along the bottom of the car door. He lay down on his back, his head round and lumpy against the concrete, to have a look. He lay there quiet beside the car and it was peaceful; he closed his eyes. He saw the small white cup of Fawna's throat, the indentation where a bird could drink. He moaned aloud.

Small rocks landed on his chest. Straight above him, Jonathan was standing on the third-floor roof in his underwear. He had a bucket full of gravel. "You want to go out for breakfast?"

"I already ate," Morris said, shading his eyes.

"How about an early lunch?" Jonathan scratched at his underwear.

"I don't want to eat right now."

More gravel. "That's not the point. I'm getting hungry and I'm all out of bucks."

Morris wondered if he would give in or refuse. The choice seemed interesting, but not important.

Jonathan leaned out over the railing. "They caught your killer friend," He said. "It's on the radio."

Morris looked up.

"They say he turned himself in. Somebody slept with his wife or shot his dog, I don't remember. You coming up here or what?"

Morris picked himself up and opened the car door. He stepped inside.

"Where are you going?" Jonathan said.

When Morris looked in the rear-view mirror he saw a nearly-naked man on the roof of a building. The car held half a tank of gas that might last for four hours. There were twenty-seven dollars in his pocket. The road stretched out across the marsh.

"Nice day for cruising," said the killer. Black-eyed susans flanked the road. "So I was tired," the killer said. "You don't know what it is to be so tired."

They crossed a bridge where two old men were dangling lines into the river.

"People change. Things never turn out the way you think they will."

Morris laughed.

"Take your own case," said the killer. "You sit around and watch TV. Your life goes by. But then all of a sudden, straight out of the blue, something changes, and turns out right. You thought it wouldn't, but there it is."

"Nothing's changed that I can tell." They passed a field of yellow irises, a brown dog dead beside the road.

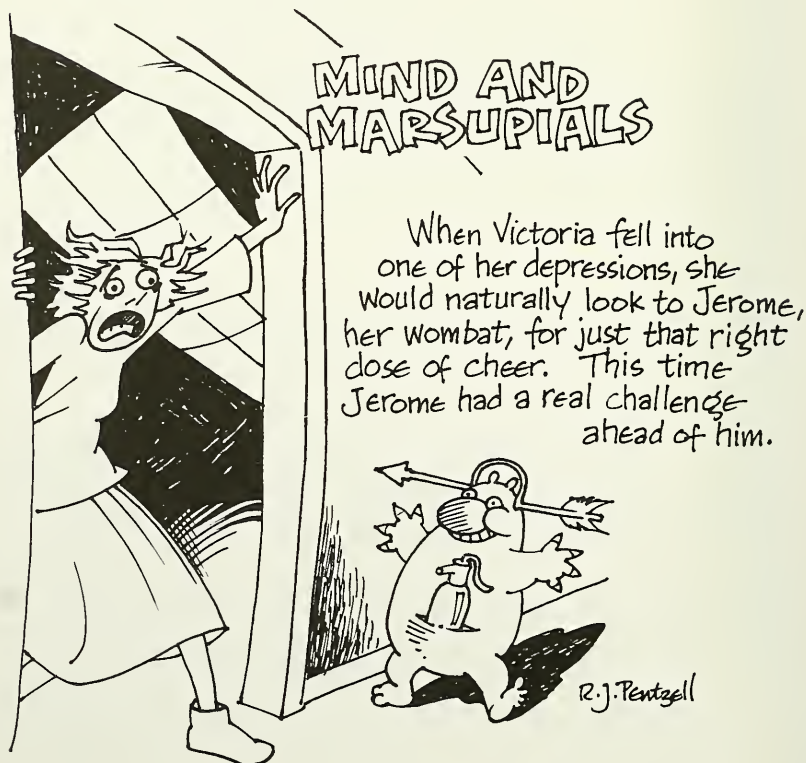
"Wait and see," the killer said.

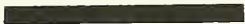
"I don't have anything to wait for." They barely yielded at the light.

"That's what I'm saying," said the killer. "You don't expect it but it comes."

They turned the corner. A sign said *Romeo: Enjoy Our Hospitality. Pop. 1037.*

"What'll you say to her?" the killer said.




JOSEPH MEREDITH

Making Ends Meet

Dawn is a whisper that wakes me.
My wife sighs amid the crumpled
topography of the bed. I get up.
Outside, eternal February howls into March
in a blow from the dark arctic that slides,
like a hurried lover, across the firm rump
of the Appalachians and batters this sleeping
house into a chorus of chatters and clangs
enough to raise the dead. It does.
I light a candle to dispel a ghost,
but it looms anyway from the shadows.

"I have sold my cello to make ends meet."

It is my tall student from years ago,
the pain in her eyes tuned to such a pitch
it could shatter glass. And me so brittle.
What will she do now, the sadness
of Mahler no more in her fingers,
nor Vivaldi's joy in her wrist?
"It's okay, really, I'll get by."
She studied literature, instead, and finance,
and so she died before she died.

When they found her, thin as a bow,
hanging like an icon in the college chapel,
she had put on her black concert dress.

Her body shrinks before my sight;
 the rope becomes this blackened wick.
 So small a flame is no defense.
 What could I have done? Love is not enough?
Te voglio bene and here's a check?

Is it February does this,
 or this cold, pre-dawn, sleeping house
 that makes aloneness so complete, it settles,
 a palpable chill, behind my kneecaps,
 in my knuckles, in my neck?
 Good practice for eternity, no doubt,
 where all ends meet.

Belfield, October, Early Morning

If some morning you could share this sight
 with me, could bear this earth-astounding light
 that pours in low through air so clear
 the sense reverts to trickery--I hear
 Pastorius whistling for his son; Old Peale
 assessing grapes, his terrier at heel--
 if we could huddle on this bench sometime
 beneath this daylight moon, a tissue-paper dime
 so thin the sky shows through, or wonder how
 against the rusting hardwoods, bole and bough,
 the evergreens, still black, conserve the night--
 or feel the sun's off-handed might
 explode the billion perpendiculars of grass--
 if. . .if every Eden did not pass,
 and leave us to our otherness. Apart,
 soul-blind, we grope in darkness for another's heart.
 I want to give you something of this dawn,
 these woods, this brilliant field, but you are gone.
 So I will come again at noon, alone,
 to mourn this sky-pierced, pale, discarnate moon.



RAYMOND J. PENTZELL

Scoundrel Plays

William Wright's recent biography of Lillian Hellman, the playwright and memoirist, documents his portrait of a talented, vindictive, endlessly self-promoting liar. Posthumously (Hellman died in 1984), the whole roster of writers who attacked Hellman's veracity in her 1976 memoir of the "McCarthy era," *Scoundrel Time*, and in the (subsequently filmed) "Julia" story in her 1973 *Pentimento*, seem to have emerged justified. Hellman's last eight years were a brouhaha of old political vendettas, nasty gossip, and bitchy denunciations all around.

So disagreeable a history makes it difficult to go back to her early plays with a clear head. Yet it is her plays, not the memoirs or the gossip, that monumentalize Hellman in anthologies as "America's Greatest Woman Dramatist." They not only shore up her reputation but also reveal as only fictions can the patterns of her image of reality. And we find something repellent in Hellman's melodramas independent of the repellencies of her memoirs, her politics, and her high-jinks. In the form of her plays - their structure, tone, ideas, the values of their characters - lurks a dramaturgic Hellman who, by an indirect arrival, turns out to be the same virago we used to encounter in N. Y. *Times* articles. Maybe this is no surprise, but then it is no simple tautology either.

"Middlebrow" and "melodrama" crop up in all discussions of Hellman's work, even in admiring criticism. Let us be precise: Hellman wrote "domestic melodrama," as distinct from

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"romantic melodrama." Domestic melodrama was originally a hybrid genre that yoked the suspense plotting of Kotzebue's and Pixerecourt's romantic thrillers with the settings and themes of the older, eighteenth-century sentimental domestic drama, the moral "weepies" churned out by Cibber, Steele, Lillo, Diderot, and Lessing. The new hybrid became popular in the 1830's with such plays as *The Factory Lad* (Surrey Theatre, 1832). It reached a plateau of middle-class respectability around 1849, when (with *Adrienne Lecouvreur*) its moral earnestness, rhetoric, and action-packed suspensefulness were wedded to the rational contrivances of Eugene Scribe's "well made play" formula, a formula which until then had been chiefly a vehicle for social comedies.

Far from deserving usage as a synonym for "stupid drama," melodrama can be an excellent thing so long as it exploits those strengths released under the pressure of its form's intrinsic limitations. Its most peculiar strength can be seen best in its original, romantic variety. This was (and is) a pop form of romantic tragicomedy. Melodrama's wild world of marvels and coincidences becomes the dreamlike setting for a moral struggle pared down to its starkest oppositions and inflated to titanic dimensions by the very force of its simplicity. Monte Cristo's Chateau d'If is purely *that which* must escaped from, no durance more vile. Monstrous villainy exists *in order* to be resisted or revenged by monstrous virtue. Every giant calls into being his own Jack.

Melodrama's world is not, as true romantic tragicomedy's is, the catalyst to psychological or religious change, growth, or increasing complexity. Rather, romantic melodrama's values are not only clear but also static. The plot may keep us in suspense of a revelation,



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but the revelation, when it comes, is of the same order of insight as everything that preceded it. Your long-lost mother may be discovered, but she does not turn out to be the woman you married and the widow of the father you killed. If that dirty old scrub-woman is revealed as None Other than your dirty old mom, that alone is plenty. In the dreamworld of romantic melodrama, the challenges and the suspense are the moves of a checkers game, black slug against red slug, paths limited and balanced. Chess is left to other genres.

What about the domestic hybrid? At its strongest, melodrama in familiar surroundings, involving familiar sorts of people, approaches romantic melo merely by making the familiar seem romantic, revealing the marvelous within it. G.K. Chesterton once praised detective fiction (a kind of melodrama) precisely for the way it can depict the "romance of the city." His own Father Brown stories offer fine examples. Or take Dickens, the Victorian melodramatist most likely to be familiar to modern readers. Who thinks to use the word "domestic" about the insane labyrinth of alleys and passages surrounding Todger's boarding house in *Martin Chuzzlewit*? Or about Dotheboys Hall in *Nickleby*, or about the roof-bridged garrets that Fagin haunted? They grew from Dickens's actual, local observations, but the Chateau d'Iff can not touch them for their power to evoke the weird wonder of a dream-setting. On stage we would be seeing the work of designers, not reading the evocative words of authors, and our experience would be the poorer for it but not of a radically different point. Think of the double-decker warrens of frontless rooms, interior and exterior both, so often featured in Victorian stage designs.

To make its proper kind of sense, domestic melodrama must be melodrama before it is domestic: unabashedly romantic in atmosphere and thus suitable to the psychological and moral simplicities of its characters and to the game-like design of its plot. Wonders are essential. In a real landscape, as shown in a film, that great cliché, train-approaching-hero-bound-to-tracks, may make for the blandest of contrived suspense, inviting comic parody from the start. But behold a full-scale locomotive nosing onto a stage from the wings (*Under the Gaslight*). It is - or certainly was - a monstrous thing, a nightmare come to life.

What is unstable in domestic melodrama, then, is the "middlebrow" ingredient, the post-Scribean wash of rationality, and the untenable pretense that what is happening onstage is like life as lived among real people rather than a paradigmatic world of thrilling archetypes. Such psychological and rhetorical verities invariably make the melodrama look silly rather than dreamlike. By the same token, the powerful simplicities of melodramatic character, plot, and setting make the attempts at verity, political and social pertinence, and fuddled human complexity seem half-hearted at best, mendacious at worst. Hellman remained stuck right in the middle of the contradiction. She would address an "issue" drawn from her experience and ours, appear to create characters from her stockpile of encounters with real people, or try to show what is likely to occur given certain credible premises. Then she would start cranking the action forward with doubled-dyed villains and paragons of mere righteousness, with ringing curtain-lines and offstage gunshots, and with rounded rhetorical periods counterpointed by laconicisms conned from Dashiell Hammett.



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In melodrama, no villain is too repugnant, no hero too attractive. If a man is an ambitious crook, he is also likely to be brutal, hypocritical, lecherous, and oily. If a woman is an innocent victim of injustice, she will also tend to be reasonable, well-spoken, dressed in quiet and flattering good taste, and appealing to nice men even if she doesn't want one. For Hellman, it is not enough that little Mary, in *The Children's Hour*, be a lying, vindictive scandalmonger. She must also be an invincible bully, a blackmailer, sexually precocious, a brilliant improviser, and instantly credible to anyone above a certain age and certain income. Superb for melodrama, but what can she possibly be doing in the same play with that tortuous, finicky, and self-righteous dissection of lovers' mutual trust and self-confidence with which Karen and Cardin take up so much of the middle of Act III? What has Karen's convoluted quibbling to do with her erstwhile melodramatic nobility, and what has melodramatic nobility to do with the icy vindictiveness underlying her dismissal of a now-repentant Mrs. Tilford in the final scene? It is as if Hellman, lest anyone accuse her of melodrama, started randomly to shoot for anti-melodrama. Or vice-versa.

Mary of *The Children's Hour* is not my favorite villain in Hellman's plays, however. My favorite is Count Teck de Brancovis of *Watch on the Rhine*. Here is a play written to urge Americans to greater assertions of "antifascism" even before declaring war on Nazi Germany. In the play, however, the amiable Americans never actually *do* anything against Nazis. They simply learn to applaud antifascist acts committed by a European hero who has already been tortured by the Nazis and who has already committed himself to active resistance in Germany. He shoots Count Teck, offstage. Later, the Americans approve of this and connive at his escape.

Given the wonderful, absolute repulsiveness of the Count, what puzzles me is how the Americans managed to refrain from falling upon him right in the drawing-room and gouging him to bits with their teaspoons.

But Count Teck de Brancovis, you see, is not a Nazi anyway. You would think that in a timely play boosting "antifascism" the villain would represent "fascism." High-risk realism might even suggest a Nazi who is not every inch a villain. Hellman gives us every inch of a villain who is not a Nazi.

The hero, Kurt Muller, has to presume on his American hostess's hospitality to the extent of killing a fellow guest on the verandah in the great cause of continuing underground resistance. If the villain had some claim to our sympathy - any claim - this could evoke a moral dilemma, not simply a problem for Miss Manners. Now, far subtler and more thoughtful writers than Hellman have failed at the perhaps-impossible problem of making a dedicated Nazi seem both plausible and human. But Hellman's villain might at least have been a sincere and articulate fiend, or barring that, a helpless but unwilling tool of the Nazis - anything to give us a fingerhold for caring about him. But what we get is a plain skunk in a black mustache: a card-sharp, coward, sponger, snoop, shakedown artist, insulter of his wife, whom he disgusts and who will cuckold him to cheers from the gallery. And yes, he is a toady to the rich and has a Romanian accent, too. He is an all-purpose combination of Oilcan Harry, Peter Lorre in *The Maltese Falcon*, and--at least to the extent that he is a parasitical Romanian Count--Dracula.

Hellman, let it be said, was making the popular-front point that a decadent, amoral, and shiftless European "old guard" must be repudiated along with the Nazi zealots themselves.



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Then why the heavy murder plot in the first place? Why all the "antifascist" rhetoric? Is it not a waste of energy to pound insects to a pulp when there is a mad dog waiting round the corner?

We seem to be doubling back gradually to Hellman's peculiar grasp of moral priorities, as manifest in *Scoundrel Time*. But perhaps it is not premature to do so. In melodrama, as James L. Smith pointedly puts it, "We enjoy triumph without considering its cost to others, despair without seeking for alternative courses, and protest without questioning the bases of our own superior moral integrity."

So we are led beyond questions of realistic appositeness into the larger question of ethical worth, which is simply this: If melodrama portrays its principal characters as merely good or merely bad, of what then does the author's idea of goodness and badness consist? Never mind that such clarity may be implausible in the "real world." What *merits* triumph? What *is* it that one despairs of? What *deserves* unadulterated protest?

What might we find noteworthy - which is necessarily to say alien - about the fundamentals of the moral universe of her plays? For one thing, there is no virtue in forgiveness. For another, small-scale villainy is attacked just as mercilessly as large-scale villainy, and sometimes singled out for that very purpose. Finally, even beyond what is normal to static single-heartedness of melodramatic character, Hellman's heroes and heroines seem to be presented as good because they are her heroes, not heroes because they are good. It is as if they are the "elect" or the "chosen people."

To our example of "unforgiveness" in the last scene of *The Children's Hour* we might add an odd incident earlier in Act III: the

return of Lily Mortar, a partly comic, mostly contemptible character whose selfish and heedless accusations helped to start the fatal "lesbian" slander and whose cowardly failure to show up at the libel hearing caused the defeat of Karen and Martha. Now, apparently broke, she returns shamefacedly to resume sponging off her niece Martha. It is not that Martha and Karen could credibly be expected to greet her with open-armed forgiveness. It is rather that her return is incredible. She knows what she has done. Further, she knows that her niece is now out of work and the school is down the drain; there is no soft touch left to be had. For Lily Mortar to show up at all is entirely unreasonable, and yet Hellman brings her back in time for Martha's suicide. In the margin of my copy of the play I have jotted, "Hellman wants to rub her face in it." indeed, we can't go home until *all* the fools' faces are rubbed in the results of their folly.

As for Hellman's full-blast artillery attacks on minor no less than major moral failings, it is plain in all her plays that she regularly condemned moral cowardice as well as active evildoing. Less often noticed are the bewildering thematic dislocations that Hellman's urge to kick small-fry can cause. We have seen the peculiar "antifascism" that is directed wholly against a run-of-the-mill no-good in *Watch on the Rhine*. The same sort of thing renders *The Searching Wind* almost nonsensical.

The Searching Wind (1944) is perhaps the least melodramatic in structure of Hellman's early plays, a chronicle of flashbacks in which are traced two lines of action, evidently meant to parallel each other in theme. The repeated failures of an American diplomat to take a sufficiently adamant stand against the spread of Fascist, Phalangist, and Nazi power in Eu-



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rope during the 1920s and '30s alternate with the repeated failures of his wife to take an equally adamant stand against the diplomat's anti-fascist mistress. The very equation of the two situations makes the thesis itself seem preposterous. Add to this that the scenes actually set before us sometimes show the diplomat in circumstances in which a Hellman-approved degree of "anti-fascism" would require him to be not only a fortune-teller but also a physical superman or else the entire U. S. Government in person. (For his wife to take on his mistress, she would only have to denounce her, with insufficient evidence, in public.) Hellman, when she wants to, sets her standards of "rewardable" behavior inhumanly high for certain characters. These are the characters who, for reasons either personal or political, she has decided are not her "elect" or "chosen" heroes, like Karen Wright and Kurt Muller.

My final demurral, about this very "chosenness," brings us back full circle to questions about Hellman's "middlebrow" audience and about the melodramatic mode of real-life political evaluations. I cannot say it better than Robert Warshow, who wrote in 1953,

What this audience demands of its artists above all is an intelligent narrowness of mind and vision and a generalized tone of affirmation, offering not any particular insights or any particular truths, but simply the assurance that insight and truth as qualities, the things in themselves, reside somehow in the various signals by which the artist and the audience have learned to recognize each other.... For this community of "dissent," inexorably stripped of all principle and all specific belief, has

retreated at last into a kind of extreme Calvinism of its own where political truth ceases to have any real connection with politics but becomes a property of the soul. Apart from all belief and all action, these people are "right" in themselves, and no longer need to prove themselves in the world of experience; the Revolution--or "liberalism" or "dissent"--has entered into them as the grace of God was once conceived to have entered into the "elect," and, like the grace of God, it is given irrevocably.

William Buckley put in strong terms what is perhaps the core of Hellman's failure to move or convince us, the point at which her melodramatic vision scrapes up against her wish to represent--and to affect--real life: "But, don't you see, the vertebral column of her thought finally emerges. She can do no wrong. '*There is nothing in my life of which I am ashamed,*' she wrote to the chairman of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, setting herself, by that sentence, in a class apart from her fellow mortals."

It is precisely a quality of vision that concerns us in an author of Hellman's reputation, not merely problems of form and genre. Hellman's disturbing--and in my view inevitably unsatisfying--triple-tracking of melodrama, Scribean dramaturgy, and didactic realism did not simply happen. It was, after all, a form she chose. If she chose it with one eye on the Broadway box-office and the other eye on her political attachments, it still remains for us to ask why such a slate of choices presented itself to her in the first place.



DAVID IGNATOW

Aesthetics

I

Life is as deceptive as the sun
on a pile of stones: they glow,
their colors attractively revealed.
An artist will paint them.

II

I want to write a poem that will make me happy
entering the world by enjoying the sight
of broken pavement, pot holes in the street,
dirty rain water in puddles and traffic
speeding by, splashing trousers and dresses
of passersby.

Alongside the street a cemetery
older than I am, older than twice me.
Enjoy that, enter that into my catalogue
of the world, and already I feel better
adrift on the street of broken pavement,
glad to be elsewhere than in the dark
of impulse.

I have acted on impulse, free to drift.
Farther on in my walk I see a railroad,
farther yet a junkyard of wrecked cars,
the cemetery of broken steel. So this
is what is meant by happiness, to roam
the streets and come across two cemeteries,
one for humans and one for human artifacts.

III

The poem of observing
through the window the desk
reflected in space,
light from the lamp
refracted upon the dark:
the desk there
upon the night as mediator
between two worlds:
yours and the darkness.

To the Poets

The rest of life is in living it
after the poem is written. That's
the hard part, but not impossible.
It will lead to yet another poem
that will make living an accessory
to writing but without which
there could be no poem. So let us
praise living for its hardships
and despairs.



Book Marks

Prize Stories 1987: The O. Henry Awards

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Reviewed by
Ed Walsh

In his Introduction, William Abrahams, editor of the O. Henry Memorial Award series for the past twenty years, mentions that many of the stories in the collection are written in the first person. And "...in recent years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of such stories. Hundreds of them are being published in magazines that range from the large to the little, from the conservative to the defiantly experimental. . . Such an outpouring can't be shrugged off as mere coincidence; it suggests a deeply felt need. The sense of truthfulness that we accord to *I* the narrator, the listener, the watcher, the witness, or to *I* the participant bearing witness to his or her own experience, a member of the story, the explorer, the discoverer—that truthfulness exerts a powerful appeal, now especially when we are being subjected to a tyranny of facts at every level of our lives, cunningly or blatantly manipulated to keep us from the truth."

Interesting theory but questionable logic. Yes, there are nine stories written in the first person. But there are also eleven stories written in the third person. Do these eleven provide less "truth" just because they're in the third person?

Maybe the reason why so many stories are being written in the first person is very simple. And maybe it has nothing to do with

facts being manipulated, and our search for truth, or any of that other sound-good stuff. It just may be that more and more writers are learning how to use the technique effectively.

I don't think it matters a tinker's dam whether one story or a hundred is written in the first person, or third person, unless you're talking about literary trends or fashion.

The real issue is whether the story "works." Whether the writer has the talent and developed the skill to dramatically and emotionally charge the story and involve the reader.

There are some heavy-hitters represented in this collection, such as Robert Boswell, Alice Adams, Stuart Dybek, James Lott, Donald Barthelme, Gina Berriault, Millicent Dillon, and Joyce Carol Oates. As it happens, Boswell, Lott, Berriault, and Oates wrote in the third person. But no matter; with each of these eight stories, the choice the writer made as to the point of view was appropriate and necessary to the story being told. And that's the key.

First Prize this year, however, is jointly shared by relatively little-known writers: Louise Erdrich for "Fleur," and Joyce Johnson for "The Children's Wing."

Both of these pieces are unsentimental stories sparsely told and beautifully wrought.

Erdrich's "Fleur" tells of a Chippewa legend. A magical and fantastical journey into the nether world. It is a romance—in the pure and literal sense—the dark myth of Fleur Pillager and Misshepesu, the water monster.

Were it not for Erdrich's talent, "Fleur" could have turned into burlesque, but she writes with a control, balance, and discipline that



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makes the legend believable, as legends are supposed to be.

The story is set in the Midwest, the hereditary home of the Chippewa, in the late teens and early 1920s. Fleur lives on a Chippewa reservation and her story is told by another Chippewa, who remains marginal to the main events.

Fleur drowns, and doom comes to the two men who tried to rescue her. So the Chippewa stay clear, fearful that Misshepesheu may want Fleur for himself.

The narrator gives us a dazzlingly vivid, folkloric description of this legendary water monster:

Our mothers warn us that we'll think he's handsome, for he appears with green eyes, copper skin, a mouth tender as a child's. But if you fell into his arms, he sprouts horns, fangs, claws, fins. His feet are joined as one, and his skin, brass scales, rings to the touch. You're fascinated, can not move. He casts a shell necklace at your feet, weeps gleaming chips that harden into mica on your breast. He holds you under. Then he takes the body of a lion or a fat brown worm. He's made of gold. He's made of beach moss. He's a thing of dry foam, a thing of death by drowning, the death a Chippewa cannot survive.

No Chippewa, that is, but Fleur Pillager. She couldn't swim, and after the first time she drowned, the people of the reservation thought Fleur would keep to herself and live quietly.

But then, after the second drowning, we knew we were dealing with something much more serious. She was haywire, out of control. She messed with evil, laughed at the old women's advice, and dressed like a man. She got herself into some half-forgotten medicine, studied ways we shouldn't talk about. Some say she kept the finger of a child in her pocket and a powder of unborn rabbits in a leather thong around her neck. She laid the heart of an owl on her tongue so she could see at night, and went out hunting, not even in her own body.

In 1920, Fleur moved to Argus, a tiny town several miles south of the Chippewa reservation, and as the narrator tells us, Pillager "almost destroyed that town."

To the end, the story is an enigma because of the way Erdrich structures it. Telling Fleur's story from a minor character's point of view creates a startlingly narrow focus, so events pile one on top of one another with no strong connective or causal relationship that "makes sense."

When you're finished reading the story, you don't know whether you've been told a series of events or a whopping tall tale. Nor does it much matter.

Joyce Johnson's "The Children's Wing," offers a contemporary setting and a more traditional tone than "Fleur." The story is told by the mother of a ten-year old boy, Nicky, who is ill.

It is rare that a story about a child works as well as this one. And it does so because Johnson infuses her characters—Nicky and his mother—with complexity and subtlety. She



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has respect for her characters, their virtues and their faults, so they are neither cardboard cut-outs nor caricatures.

Both Nicky and his mother learn from the stay in the hospital. Nicky, of course, is becoming an adult, although this is hardly the typical rite-of-passage story. On another level, Nicky's mother also benefits. But what she learns is not something long-lost and forgotten in her own childhood and now relived through her son, but something new to her, as it is—and should be—to Nicky.

Johnson sets the stage, and the tone, of the story with a gothic description.

The children's wing was in the oldest part of the hospital, one of those gloomy gray stone buildings put up at the turn of the century. There was a marble rotunda on the ground floor. When you took the elevator up, there was no more marble, just dim green corridors and unending linoleum and muffled fake laughter from all of the television sets.

Most of the boys in the ward are accident cases. But we are never told exactly what is wrong with Nicky. He is in a body cast: "left lumbar vertebra. . . unknown organism." And as "science" fails (to diagnose the problem), "art" begins to take over.

Nicky, understandably, first withdraws.

I kept buying Nicky things; so did his father. With a sick child, you're always trying to bring pieces of the outside in, as if to say, That's the reality, not this. . . [But] Nicky liked only one thing, really; he could have done without the rest. A fantasy war game called D & D that was all the

rage among the fifth graders. I never even tried to understand it. I kept buying the strange-looking dice he asked for and the small lead figures that he'd have to paint himself—dragons and wizards and goblins—and new strategy books with even more complicated rules. 'I want to live in a fantasy world,' he told me. I remember it shocked me he knew so explicitly what he was doing.

But it's not "pieces of the outside" or D & D that does it. Enter Joseph, mentally disturbed fifteen-year old boy. Joseph is kind of a wanderer who finally locates himself in an empty bed in Nicky's ward. His bizarre and unpredictable behavior upsets the mothers—including Nicky's—who petition to have Joseph removed. Bureaucratic snafus keep Joseph in the ward, however, at least for a time.

Joseph and Nicky become friends, and Nicky sets aside D & D. What Nicky, and his mother, finally discover is that there is no escape in fantasy.

One of the most powerful stories in the collection is Robert Boswell's "The Darkness of Love." This third-person story is about a black man, Wayne Handle, a burned-out New York City cop. Handle is in Monroe, Tennessee visiting his in-laws. His wife, Marilyn, is still in New York, finishing the second year of law school. Handle has been in Tennessee two weeks. He is ending his visit and the story focuses on the last three days. His wife is to join him tomorrow.

Handle is a man in turmoil. He realizes that the person he thought he was evidently is not the person he actually is. Boswell ends the story at the dramatic moment, with Handle's contradictions and questions more prevalent



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than answered. "The Darkness of Love" is a beautiful story, masterfully told.

When a story works it has the delicate, subtle grace—and power—of a concerto. But when it doesn't, there is only the dissonant clash of cymbals. Unfortunately, there are two noticeable clinkers in this collection: Jim Pitzen's "The Village," and Daniel Stern's "The Interpretation of Dreams by Sigmund Freud: A Story."

"The Village," about the Vietnam War, in which Pitzen served, is a fashion piece. A hot topic. Images are stale and the language, much of it, psychobabble.

The village was ancient. It lay nestled in a peaceful valley. . . The village had been destroyed so many times and the people of the village had become so good at having it destroyed that the village actually did not exist any more; in fact it had never existed. . . In fact everything was an illusion except for the jungle, which was an orderly place where things existed to be killed and eaten. All humankind and all the possessions and passions of humankind (including war) were illusions.

It's a good idea that Pitzen is trying. But he lectures. It's a course in Epistemology 101. And the denouement, when the soldier Hardje is accidentally killed by his buddy, Tyler, is a bust because Pitzen as author has intruded and repeatedly diverted the reader's attention.

Stern's story "The Interpretation of Dreams..." is about a man named Dickstein, 14 years older than his wife of three months, Sharon.

Both Dickstein and Sharon had been married previously. Sharon is widowed. Dickstein is divorced from a widow. It has been Dickstein's history, in fact, to have bed widows, and Sharon is his fourth. That's the dramatic problem: why only widows?

But the story gets away from Stern. The theme is too ambitious and complicated. Stern relies on dialogue to set the stage and this creates a problem for him and, unfortunately, for the reader.

Sharon only recently discovered that her new husband had been married to a widow. This fact is critical to the story and the reader must know it for the story to develop. How to get it across is the creative problem. Stern has Sharon say, "But you didn't tell me your first wife—Alma—was a widow until—for God's sake, last week."

This is convoluted and stilted dialogue in that situation. Sharon and Dickstein already know the facts, there is no need to reiterate them. A natural dialogue between them would most likely be something like, "But you didn't tell me that Alma was a widow until—for God's sakes, last week" which, of course, provides no referent for the reader. Like Pitzen, Stern tells, when he should show, an indication that the tail is wagging the dog.

There is a certain unevenness about *Prize Stories* 1987. But that can be expected with twenty stories. The publicity release that came with the book said that this collection is "essential for libraries, and a useful text for students of literature and writing."

It's also an essential book for those who simply love fiction and want to experience the best of contemporary American short stories.


MEDBH McGUCKIAN

Amelia


If women are either pekes or horses, she
Was unmistakably horse, the pure-bred
Open-spaces type, known by so many names
A man would have been proud to ever grass her.

I met her in her father love, the free fall
Before her deckled flowering, watched her undress
In the warm sewing room, the lace tying
The lips of what I wanted to say --

Romantic to a fault--Oh my American
Morning, how I just like to be in the room
With you! and so it sank to the bottom
The way dead seals do, or a short

Shipboard friendship one might strike up
Between Horseneck Beach
And Elizabeth Island. She was not one
To make a fetish of an illness, or return

From Paris looking any less than nordic:
Only when I was married would I learn
How to barnstrom the proposal corner,
Sourland Mountain, the worst-designed house.


EITHNE STRONG

Dublin Bay

A good time to come is January:
there is a geranium sky behind Longford Terrace,
a black pine gone mad between chimneys,
from where you stand by the abandoned soap factory.

Turn right: the town is walled in mist:
no twentieth century, but hard, sure,
the winter rip of Vikings, tearing dire
by Howth, fogged also, yet solid, fast.

You are back where Brian seemed holy,
praying in Clontarf. There are no bulls either
nor the strewn excesses of a modern summer
at Seapoint. Only the cormorants, happy,

and the ceaseless pagan sea; you climb
as do two or three others, each alone,
trudging towards that queer geranium zone. . .
January, there, is a good time.

Note: The Gaelic form of Clontarf is Cluain Tarbh which means The Meadow of the Bulls.



Compiled by John S. Baký

So They Say...

Book reviewers don't have the last say. And the first say can be a bit risky. Witness these examples from the book reviews of the past.

■ On JANE AUSTEN

I am at a loss to understand why people hold Miss Austen's novels at so high a rate, which seem to me vulgar in tone, sterile in artistic invention, imprisoned in the wretched conventions of English society, without genius, wit, or knowledge of the world. Never was life so pinched and narrow. The one problem in the mind of the writer. . . is marriageableness. . . Suicide is more respectable.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Journal*, 1861

■ On CHARLES DICKENS

We do not believe in the permanence of his reputation. . . Fifty years hence, most of his allusions will be harder to understand than the allusions in *The Dunciad*, and our children will wonder what their ancestors could have meant by putting Mr. Dickens at the head of the novelists of his day.

-*Saturday Review*, 1858

■ On RALPH WALDO EMERSON

A hoary-headed and toothless baboon.

-*Thomas Carlyle*, 1871

■ On MOBY DICK

Redburn was a stupid failure, *Mardi* was hopelessly dull, *White Jacket* was worse than either; and, in fact was such a very bad book,

that, until the appearance of *Moby Dick* we had set it down as the very ultimatum of weakness to which the author could attain. It seems, however, that we were mistaken. In bombast, in caricature, in rhetorical artifice—generally as clumsy as it is ineffectual—and in low attempts at humor, each of his volumes has been an advance upon its predecessors.

-*Democratic Review*

■ On THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

Recent war novels have accustomed us all to ugly words and images, but from the mouths of the very young and protected they sound peculiarly offensive. . . the ear refuses to believe.

-*New York Herald Tribune Book Review*

■ On HAMLET

It is a vulgar and barbarous drama, which would not be tolerated by the vilest populace of France, or Italy. . . one would imagine this piece to be the work of a drunken savage.

-*Voltaire*, 1768

■ On WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Shakespeare's name, you may depend on it, stands absurdly too high and will go down. He had no inventions as to stories, none whatever. He took all his plots from old novels, and threw their stories into dramatic shape, at as little expense of thought as you or I could turn his plays back again into prose tales.

-*Lord Byron*, 1814



So They Say...

■ On THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY

... unmanly, sickening, vicious (though not exactly what is called "improper"), and tedious.

-Athenaeum

On Joyce's ULYSSES

I finished *Ulysses* and think it is a mis-fire. . . The book is diffuse. It is brackish. It is pretentious. It is underbred, not only in the obvious sense, but in the literary sense. A first-rate writer, I mean, respects writing too much to be tricky.

-Virginia Woolf, 1922

■ On THE ART OF REVIEWING

When a man publishes a book, there are so many stupid things said that he declares he'll never do it again. The praise is almost always worse than the criticism.

-Sherwood Anderson

I have long felt that any reviewer who expresses rage and loathing for a novel is preposterous. He or she is like a person who has just put on full armor and attacked a hot fudge sundae or banana split.

-Anatole Broyard

■ On CREATION

The world was created on 22d October, 4004 B.C. at 6 o'clock in the evening.

-James Ussher (Archbishop of Armagh, 1581-1656)

Heaven and earth, centre and circumference, were created together, in the same instant, and clouds full of water. . . (This) work took place and man was created by the Trinity on the twenty-third of October, 4004 B.C., at nine o'clock in the morning.

-Dr. John Lightfoot, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge, amplifying and correcting by some 15 hours Bishop Ussher's estimate made two centuries earlier, 1859

If. . . the motion of the earth were circular, it would be violent and contrary to nature, and could not be eternal, since. . . nothing violent is eternal. . . It follows, therefore, that the earth is not moved with a circular motion.

-St. Thomas Aquinas, c. 1270

■ On THE FLESH

By 1975 sexual feeling and marriage will have nothing to do with each other.

-John Langdon-Davies (British anthropologist, journalist, author and Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 1936)

If the wound is large, the weapon with which the patient has been wounded should



So They Say...

be anointed daily; otherwise, every two or three days. The weapon should be kept in pure linen and a warm place but not too hot, nor squalid, lest the patient should suffer harm.

-Daniel Becker, (leading proponent of amarium ugentum, the widely held theory that instead of treating a wound directly, it is better to administer aid to the weapon that caused it), 1622

■ On THE FUTURE

All the waste in a year from a nuclear power plant can be stored under a desk.

-Ronald Reagan (Republican candidate for President, quoted in the Burlington Free Press, February 15, 1980)

[1930 will be] a splendid employment year.

-U.S. Department of Labor, New Year's Forecast, December 1929)

These really are good times, but only a few know it. If this period of convalescence through which we have been passing must be spoken of as a depression, it is far and away the finest depression that we have ever had.

-Henry Ford, (President of the Ford Motor Company)

I don't need bodyguards.

-James Hoffa (President of the Teamsters Union, interviewed by Jerry Stanecki for Playboy, June, 1975)

Democracy will be dead by 1950.

-John Langdon-Davies (British journalist and Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 1936)

No woman in my time will be Prime Minister or Chancellor or Foreign Secretary-not the top jobs. Anyway, I wouldn't want to be Prime Minister; you have to give yourself 100 per cent.

-Margaret Thatcher, (interviewed in the London Telegraph after being appointed Shadow Spokesman on Education, 1969)

To kill a man will be considered as disgusting [in the twentieth century] as we in this day consider it disgusting to eat one.

-Andrew Carnegie, 1900

It seems pretty clear that no civilized people will ever again permit its government to enter into a competitive race.

-Nicholas Murray Butler (President of Columbia University, 1914)

Hitler's influence is waning so fast that the government is no longer afraid of the growth of the Nazi movement.

-William C. Bullitt (American Diplomat, letter to President-elect Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1932)



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